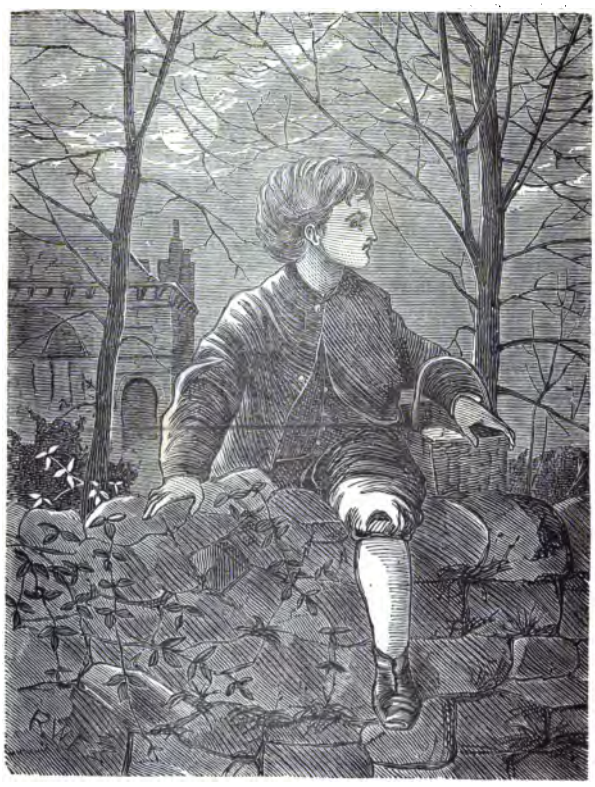


See Page 217

THE ORPHANS:

BY

E. C. PHILLIPS,

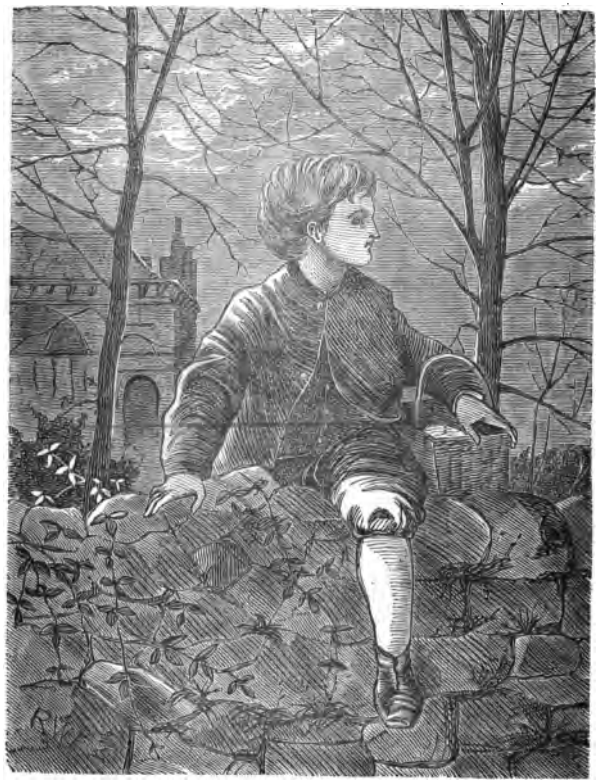
Author of

"PRAYERS FOR THE LITTLE ONES."

London:
JAMES PARKER & Co.,
377, STRAND.

1872.

CONTENTS.



See Page 217

THE ORPHANS:

BY

E. C. PHILLIPS,

Author of

"PRAYERS FOR THE LITTLE ONES."

London:
JAMES PARKER & Co.,
377, STRAND.

1872.

TO

ALEXANDER BLAIR, ESQ., LL.D.,

AS A

HEARTFELT TRIBUTE

OF

GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION,

This Book

IS

DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

THE ORPHANS.

CHAPTER I.

ETHEL AND HAROLD.

"OH! Ethel, is not this dreadful?" exclaimed Harold Lenie, a dark-complexioned, bright-eyed little boy of seven, as he ran into the room where his sister was sitting alone, and threw his arms round her neck. "Oh! Ethel, I hate Aunt more and more every day, and if I were a big boy and could work, I would run right away and make you come with me."

"Hush! Harold, darling," was his sister's reply, spoken gently, as she kissed the little fellow now clinging to her. "You must not

talk like that. We should not hate any one. Mamma always said Christians could not hate each other."

"Aunt isn't a Christian," replied the child, "she's as unkind as she can be: and she said just now that you were not good at all, but very sly, and then I ran away, because I could not bear to hear any more. If she says it again, I'll tell her that she's sly."

"You must never be rude, Harold, whatever Aunt may say," said Ethel, and a tear glistened in her eye, pained at what her brother told her; "Aunt is like Mamma to us now, and we must obey her."

"Like Mamma! Oh, Ethel!" sobbed the little boy so lately made an orphan, "she's not a bit like her. Mamma used to be fond of us, and say she loved us; but Aunt never does anything of the kind, and is always scolding whether we are naughty or not."

"Poor Harold!" said his sister, again kissing him, and wiping away her own tears, brought into her eyes by the comparison drawn by the little boy. "It is hard to bear,

but remember what Mamma was always telling us about JESUS suffering and having cruel things said to Him, and how she told us always to be good, whatever happened."

"It was different being good to Mamma and being good to Aunt," still argued Harold; "I loved Mamma and I love her now, but I hate Aunt, Ethel, whatever you may say, and I'm sure that you must too."

"No, Harold, I do not hate her, and I always pray to GOD to make me love her, and help me to be good, even if she does scold."

"But what's the good of doing right to be scolded for it?" again persisted Harold. "We might as well not do it, then."

"We should do right to please GOD. He sees everything, you know, and it is better for GOD to love us than anybody else."

"But Mamma used to love us as well as GOD," still argued the little fellow, "and then it was much easier to be good."

"Of course it was easier, Harold; but we must not give up anything because it is

difficult. When Mr. Dalmer gave us his blessing as we were coming away, he prayed that we might be GOD's true children, and serve Him faithfully through all trials and difficulties. I thought then that it would be very different for us when we came here, and I wrote down afterwards Mr. Dalmer's words, so as never to forget them; and you must try, Harold, and you must pray to GOD to make you good, or you will never be so."

"I will try, Ethel," said the little boy, "and you must be like Mamma to me: if only Aunt wouldn't scold; she speaks so angrily to me, and then I can't help hating her."

Again Ethel spoke of Christian love, again she told Harold what his mother would have said to him had she been alive and could have heard him talk, and again the little fellow promised to try and be good. It was a winter's evening—twilight was setting in, and, in the almost darkened chamber, the two children of the Cross knelt down and prayed to their loving Father to aid His orphan children in following the example of the one

perfect Child, Who, although God, had been obedient to His Mother; and besought Him to forgive and raise them up again when they did what was wrong.

Ethel and Harold Lenie had lost their father a little more than a year ago. Some three months since their mother, whom they so dearly loved, had followed him; and the children were left under the sole guardianship of her brother.

Ethel was eleven years old when her mother died: she had been her constant companion, and had learnt all that she knew from lips not often opened, save to words in some way good for the hearts of those who listened to their gentle utterance.

She was not a pretty child—no one could say that Ethel Lenie was pretty; but there was something so gentle and so sweet in the expression of the small thoughtful and sorrowful face, that you could not help being attracted by it.

Harold, on the other hand, who had been his father's pet and pride, was a handsome

little fellow; he was loving, sometimes almost to a fault; willing to do anything for those he loved. Impetuous, and quickly proud of the notice his father would take of him, he was apt to say and do things that he knew to be wrong; but a word, or even a look of rebuke, from the gentle mother would bring the little boy, shedding bitter tears of penience, to her side, and he would promise "never to displease Mamma again."

But it was Ethel, the elder of the two, who best loved her mother, and who felt and prized her teaching the most; and when she died, the poor little girl felt that she had lost her all—everything that could make life happy to her.

The good priest who had attended her mother on her dying bed, comforted Ethel; reminded her of the precepts that her mother had instilled, and told her how she could begin, child though she was, to live for the SAVIOUR who had died for her: whilst he pointed out to her a fresh motive in life:—there was her little brother; she could pray

for him, and watch and guide him along the narrow path, and together they might travel the thorny road, at the end of which, if faithful, they would again meet their mother. Then had followed the Blessing, which had so impressed Ethel, when, forecasting the new dangers and temptations that would assail the orphans, he had prayed that they might pass through them, stedfast in the service of their God.

Ethel loved her little brother with all her heart, sometimes, when in former days his handsome face had been admired, and much notice had been taken of him, while she had been overlooked, she had felt jealous of the praise, and wished that she had been pretty too; but since their trouble had come so suddenly upon them, these thoughts had lost their place in Ethel's heart, and she had been one of the foremost to make much of Harold.

Ethel Lenie was of a mixed character:—gentle, loving, self-denying, truthful, and obedient, she lived under the peril of one

"easily besetting" sin, through one disposition strong beyond any other, which led her often to long to be different from what she really was. Her great failing was a tendency to envy and jealousy; comparing herself with her companions, she felt first a mortification, and then a pang of envy, at what she heard praised in them, or in what she saw them excel —and she was quick, at these times, both to hear and to see, let it be what it might—a gift, or an accomplishment; an ennobling quality, winning behaviour, or even good looks, in which she sometimes thought herself deficient. If turned Heavenward, this anxiety to think well of herself would tend to excite in her an habitual, rigorous searching of every feeling, thought, and act by the Gospel standard; it would germ into an aspiration to rise, day by day, higher and nearer the Great Example.

But our Ethel was as yet too much the child of this world, and she knew her peril. But her aim was set high; she would be a child of God, conscious as she was of her

frailty, and she would, by His help, trample under foot this temptation. She would close her ears to the whispers of Satan, who sought to allure her from the narrow way: and when the questioning came—Why had another been favoured more than herself by the Giver, who bestows or withholds as He wills, and will not be questioned?—she would try to be humble and thankful still, and learn to hear others praised without feeling envious.

This, then, was the evil in herself that Ethel tried in good earnest to conquer, and the opposite virtue, together with many others, she hoped in time, by GOD's grace, to acquire. Poor Ethel! To fight against sin is a hard, a wearisome task, but alone she knew she need never fight; if an evil angel were permitted to tempt her to wrong, another, and one that loved her very dearly, was there also, to aid her to resist the bad influence. The thought of the guardianship of Angels was a great support and solace to the orphan girl.

Harold was so much younger than Ethel,

he understood little of these things, and was easily influenced by what was going on about him. Still fresh in the child's mind was the thought of his gentle mother: and often, when on the point of doing what was wrong, Ethel reminded him of words that she had spoken, he would desist at once from his purpose; but there was no knowing what present influences might do, and Ethel trembled for her little brother when she saw how he missed the love that had once been of such salutary avail in leading him right; and now, in sight of the temptations to which he was exposed, that she might lead him in the right way, and herself set him a good example, was the earnest prayer that rose again and again from her inmost heart.

The two had been a little more than a week at their Uncle's house. By his wish they had been brought hither, instead of being sent to school; he was a kind-hearted man and dearly loved his only sister, and for her sake he now felt for her orphan children.

Mrs. Ellis had nothing of her husband's kindness, and she tried to dissuade him from the step that he was taking, but to no purpose. The children were sent for, and arrived; and Mrs. Ellis, who received them unwillingly into her family, was ungracious from the first.

To children so accustomed to be loved, and who had looked forward to find in their Aunt a second mother, this coldness was more than they knew how to bear; the very moment that they saw her their love, that they had been so ready to offer her, had been stifled; and they looked upon their Aunt with dread; and, as Harold had expressed his feelings to his sister, he began to hate her.

Mr. and Mrs. Ellis had three children of their own—a boy of thirteen, a girl of twelve, and another little daughter just five. This was the family into which the Lenies were received.

Fortunately for the bereaved ones, they loved each other dearly, and were never so happy as when they were together; this

indulgence was not often granted them, and now, when they had finished their short but fervent prayer, and kissed each other, the bell rang for them to go down stairs.

Tea was ready when they entered the dining-room, and round the tea-table were seated Mrs. Ellis and her children: timidly the orphans approached and took their seats.

"Where have you been all this time, Ethel?" asked her aunt, in a stern voice. "I am always telling you not to sit alone so much."

"I did not intend to stay so long when I went upstairs, Aunt," was the answer. "I only meant to finish a little work, and then come down again."

"Then why did you not do so? you are always ready with excuses, Ethel Lenie."

Ethel was silent—she did not know what to say.

"Are you not going to answer me?" again asked her aunt.

"I was talking to Harold," was the truthful reply.

"And are you obliged to be up-stairs to talk to your brother? I should like to know what you have to say that cannot be said before me. What have you been talking about?"

Ethel made no answer.

"Speak, child," said her Aunt, authoritatively.

"I do not wish to tell you; please, Aunt, do not make me," pleaded the little girl.

"You do not wish to tell me; another instance of your slyness! You are a bad girl, Ethel, and you try to make your little brother bad also. I dare say you have been telling him he is ill-treated here, and putting all sorts of rebellious thoughts into his heart. If you do not tell me what you have been saying, I shall send you to bed."

Ethel hesitated. To tell her Aunt a part of the conversation, without telling her what led to it, she knew she could not; and if she told the whole, her Aunt would be angry with Harold.

She was firm, and made no reply.

"You are obstinate, Ethel," said her cousin Robert, a rough boy, who was himself often guilty of the fault which he now imputed to Ethel. "Send her to bed, Mamma, if she will not tell."

Robert was one of those who, continually deserving to be punished themselves, are glad to see punishment light on the head of others.

Mrs. Ellis turned to Ethel: "Again I ask you, what you have been saying to Harold?"

"I will tell you," said the little boy, to his Aunt's astonishment, standing out and daring her: "I told Ethel that I hated you, and she said I ought not to do so, but ought to be good, even if you were unkind."

"I thought it was something of that sort," said the unreasonable woman; "Ethel has been telling you that I am unkind! Ungrateful children, you'd be at school now, if it were not for my kindness, and this is all the return I meet with; you deserve to be treated unkindly in reality."

Mrs. Ellis took no further notice of what

Harold had said of his own share in the conversation. For some reason of her own, most of her spite was directed against Ethel, and she would far rather punish her than her little brother. No more was said then: tea was poured out and the evening meal proceeded. Ethel could not eat—in vain she tried to obey her Aunt when she desired her to do so.

After tea Mrs. Ellis again addressed Ethel:—

"You can go to bed now," she said, "and remember another time, that when I ask a question, I require an answer; and if I think that you instil wicked feelings into Harold's heart, I shall remove him from the little room adjoining yours."

Ethel burst into tears: had this been her desire when she spoke to, and prayed for him? Did she wish to instil wrong principles into her little brother's heart? God knew, and in that assurance Ethel cared lightly for one human ill opinion. And if Harold might not sleep in the little room close to her's?—

This was Ethel's greatest comfort, that, whatever she had to endure during the day, at night she and her little brother could have a quiet time by themselves; and she could see that he said his prayers, and they might repeat their evening hymn together. If this were denied her, if Harold were removed from near her room, Ethel would indeed be sad.

"Do not make that noise, Ethel. You should learn not to be sly, and leave off talking against me behind my back, and then I should have no occasion to scold you; as it is now, you are always doing what is wrong."

Harold cried also.

"Oh, never mind, Ethel, darling," he sobbed, as he embraced his sister, "she *is* cruel. If Mamma had only lived, and we had never come to this horrid place!"

"Ungrateful wretches," said Mrs. Ellis: "go to bed, both of you, and if I hear such language again, I shall turn you away."

She pointed to the door; and hand in

hand the orphans left the room. As Ethel was going, she asked to have a candle.

"You are not to have one," was the answer; "your punishment is to go to bed in the dark. Shut the door and be off at once."

They crept up-stairs, groped their way to her room, and entered it. They closed the door after them, and then let their hearts have their way.

"Oh, Ethel," exclaimed Harold, still sobbing violently, "if I were only bigger, I'd kill Aunt, upon my life I would. It's only that I'm a little boy that I don't, for I hate her with all my heart."

Ethel was crying aloud. "Don't talk so, Harold, oh! please don't; it is naughty of you to say such wicked things."

"I mean it," said the little boy, and if the room had not been quite dark, Ethel would have seen an angry look in her brother's eye, peculiar and sad in one so young, who should have been taught only to love. Ethel was almost tempted to despair, herself. How

terribly did these orphans realize now that they were orphans.

"It is hard, Harold, it is difficult to be good; but think of GOD, Harold; think of JESUS CHRIST, think of the Angels; oh! think of Mamma, and then try to be good."

She drew him towards her.

"If you would only try, Harold, very hard, —and even if Aunt does separate us, be a good boy at night, and say your prayers and your hymn just the same, and go on loving me. Do you know, Harold," she said, under her breath, "that if I had not you to love me, I should be very, very miserable." She kissed the tears from her brother's cheek.

"I shall always love you, Ethel," he said; "but if Aunt tells me to go into another room, I think I shall say I shan't.

"You must not say that, Harold; you must be obedient, you know, if you want GOD to love you, and I am sure we both want that;" and telling her little brother to kneel down, he became calmer and instantly obeyed, and so, side by side, they said their evening

prayer together in the unbroken stillness of a dark room; and as they prayed, fear seemed to depart, hope seemed to revive within their breasts, and the children realized most fully a Presence near them, "darkness and light to Whom are both alike." Then they repeated the Lord's Prayer, and prayed for forgiveness as they forgave. Did they forgive? Ethel paused before she uttered the prayer, the answer to which she knew depended much upon the feelings of her own heart:—if she did not fully forgive her Aunt, at least she wished to do so—and she asked a blessing for her who had treated her so unkindly.

They rose, repeated their evening hymn, undressed quietly in the dark, separated, and Harold went to his little bed. Happiness seemed once again within their reach. In the name of their SAVIOUR they laid them down to rest, and in the arms of the watchful Angels who shielded them, they fell asleep, and for a time forgot all trouble.

What were the thoughts of the guardian

entrusted with the care of Mrs. Ellis's soul? What must his grief have been that night, when he thought of the woe pronounced against those who should offend a little one? How must the guardian Angels of these little orphans have accused her to their God, when thoughts of hatred and unforgiveness had been put into their loving hearts by the ill-treatment of another? Did Mrs. Ellis pause to consider? No, she cared not for God, neither was God in all her thoughts; she was an unprincipled woman of the world, who sought pleasure and her own ease, and disliked to have the care of other children thrust upon her;—and her husband liked these children: he had told her that he thought them good, and said that he would like his own to resemble them more. This had made Mrs. Ellis angry, and when, on the first night of their arrival, Mr. Ellis had taken Ethel on his knee, and had kissed her, and asked her about her mother, and her last illness, Mrs. Ellis had thought that Ethel was taking the place of her own children in

her husband's affection, and she had disliked her from that hour.

Unconsciously, undeservedly, the child had formed an enemy—a bitter enemy—in her Aunt; but all was not ill with Ethel to-night, for now she slept quietly, and dreamt of her mother and forgot all sorrow. It was otherwise with her Aunt: for although no tears bedewed her pillow, as they did those of the orphans, yet the inward peace, that was vouchsafed to them in the midst of sorrow, was withheld from her.

Chapter II.

THE WALK.

IT was still dark when Ethel awoke in the morning: her sorrow had been forgotten during the night; she had dreamt sweetly that she was talking to her mother as in by-gone days, and she had felt quite happy.

But when her eyes opened in the morning, the vision had disappeared; and she remembered where she was, and to what she had to look forward.

Harold still slept peaceably in his bed.

"If we could only be certain to be good,"

she murmured, "it would not matter so much what we had to suffer; but it is so hard to do right when we are so unhappy—and poor Harold does not understand that GOD loves us all the while He is punishing us."

An hour or two passed; and while the rest of the household slept, Ethel was lying in her bed thinking, and wondering what would happen to them next. At length the bell rang, and she knew that it was time to rise; she awoke Harold, and they dressed themselves. The morning prayer was forgotten by neither; and at the sound of the second bell, they went hand in hand down stairs.

How different it seemed to entering the breakfast-room at their own dear old home Full of peaceful, holy thoughts, had they been wont to welcome the new day there, with no fear of being sad, and with but one object in view—to try to be good, and to bring smiles of satisfaction in to their mother's face.

Now, they feared as they were beginning another day, and trembled as they came into

the room. Mrs. Ellis only was there, and Ethel, advancing towards her Aunt, would have kissed her, but she pushed the child away.

"No, Ethel, I cannot kiss you. A child who can call the one who acts a mother's part towards her unkind, can find no pleasure in kissing her. I hate deception."

"I am very sorry, Aunt, for anything I said," was Ethel's answer; "please kiss me and forgive me."

It was in vain that Ethel asked forgiveness; to Mrs. Ellis her apology was only an acknowledgment of having called her unkind, and her anger increased. So the little girl, who longed for forgiveness and a little love to help her in her fresh start in the endeavour to please, was obliged to forego either; and moving away again, she stood a little distance from her Aunt.

Harold offered no apologies, but Mrs. Ellis drew him towards her. "You're a fine little fellow," she said, kissing the handsome boy, "and take care Ethel does not spoil you.

She would like to make a girl of you, if she could, and teach you to be as disagreeable as she is herself."

Harold looked up; he was very much surprised that his Aunt should take any notice of him, and the little word of praise pleased him, but still he felt angry to hear her speak so unkindly of his sister. Yet Harold was such a child still, and so easily impressed, that he believed it might be true that Ethel wanted to make a girl of him, and although he loved her very much,—far better than he did any one else, he thought that she certainly was very silly to be always telling him not to hate people; and he resolved to retaliate the next insult that should be offered him, whether it came from the woman now his flatterer, or from any other quarter.

The little ones are very weak and very helpless; therefore He, who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, has left a special charge to feed and tend His lambs; and has pronounced so dreadful a woe against

those who would hinder a little one on his road to Heaven.

The young Ellis' now came down to breakfast: they seemed never to be reproved, whether they were late or no. On the first morning after Ethel's arrival, she had been surprised at the non-observance of family prayers; but, by degrees, she had ceased to miss what at her own home she had been accustomed to, and this morning she did not notice the omission at all.

Presently Mr. Ellis entered the room; the meal was a silent one, as his children seldom spoke much in his presence. After breakfast, Mrs. Ellis went at once to make her house-hold arrangements, and the children adjourned to the school-room. Ethel would have gone, also; but her Uncle called her back.

"I want to speak to you a minute," he said, so kindly, and in a voice that so resembled her own dear mother's, that Ethel burst into tears. He drew her towards him, and once again placed her on

his knee. "I was sorry to find, last night when I came home, Ethel," he said, "that you had been rude to your Aunt, and had been sent to bed. It is kind of her, you know, to have you here; and you must try to be good."

"I did not mean to be naughty, indeed I did not, Uncle," she sobbed; "and if Aunt would only not have been cross, I should not have been so at all."

"But you refused to tell her what you had been talking to Harold about; and he himself owned you had been saying that your Aunt was unkind.

"I did not say it like that," she answered, still unwilling to relate exactly what she had said; "but I am very sorry now, and I asked Aunt to forgive me, and she will not,"—and Ethel cried again.

Mr. Ellis kissed the weeping child. "Your Aunt hates ingratitude," he said, "and you must try to show her that you love her."

"I want to do so, so much. Oh! Uncle, if Aunt would only let me love her as I did

Mamma, I would try to be good to her then."

Mr. Ellis believed her, and notwithstanding the many accusations brought against her in his presence, when he had said he thought Ethel a good child, he still held his opinion; and loved her, who so resembled her mother when she was a child. He sighed—could he have had Ethel all to himself, he was sure that he could have made something of her: now he saw she was not in the least understood.

"Will you really try, then," he asked at last, "to love your Aunt, and to please her, Ethel?"

She promised to do so:—her Uncle, kissing her again, told her to go to her lessons, and Ethel obeyed;—her little heart once more beating happily in the consciousness that some one did love her, and was kind to her, even here, and this thought helped her to make still braver resolutions for the future. There was some one to please after all, some one who really loved her; and to satisfy her

Uncle and to merit his smile, would henceforth be another incentive to aid Ethel in doing right.

The morning passed pretty quietly for Ethel. Her Aunt did not come into the school-room, and she was a favourite with Miss Barnes, the daily governess; so that, when under her charge, there was no fear but of justice being done her. In the afternoon Mrs. Ellis went for a drive, and said she would take three of the children with her. Robert did not wish to go, so the lot fell to Ida, Lilla, and Harold, who, Mrs. Ellis said, had been a good boy at his lessons. No notice was taken of his sister, good though she had been that morning:—hard as she had tried to please every one, not a word of approbation was bestowed upon her, and she felt herself completely overlooked. She did not care at all about the drive; but she could not help a touch of jealousy and discontent crossing her mind to see little Lilla, and even Harold, taken out, whilst she was left at home. If she

had been tempted to be envious of others in by-gone days, when—so happy in being her mother's companion—some such slight grievance had come in the way to check her else perfect happiness, how much oftener must the temptation be felt now, when she was always set aside and others placed before her.

Harold was delighted at the idea of a drive, and to-day his Aunt had been so much kinder to him, that his hatred was fast wearing off. For a moment he felt sad at the thought of leaving Ethel behind; but when he told her so, and she kissed him, saying she did not mind, he believed her, and in his thoughtlessness and impetuosity he went off quite happy.

Ethel returned to the school-room, and, taking a chair by the fire, began to read a book in which she was much interested. This really afforded her more pleasure than a drive would have done; but it was the being so slighted that had grieved Ethel, and wounded her pride.

She had not been reading long, when Robert came to the door.

"I say, Ethel," he said, bursting into the room, "come for a walk with me. Wordsworth was going, and now he can't: it's awfully dull going out alone."

Ethel hesitated; Robert was no favorite with her, and she would much rather have remained at home reading her book; but then, would that have been kind? Robert saw her wavering, and tried to coax her—"Don't be disagreeable, Ethel; come along; a walk will do you good."

She shut her book; that she disliked Robert seemed to her a reason the more for practising the self-denial that was now required of her. Here was a way of pleasing God without any one's knowing it; and Ethel determined to oblige her cousin.

I shall not be a minute getting ready," she said, as she ran up the stairs; and, true to her word, a few moments after, she was there again, equipped for walking.

"Which way shall we go?" she asked, as they left the house.

"Oh! anywhere across the fields," he said; "there's a *jolly* walk over yonder."

They sauntered on; it was a glorious day, and Ethel quite enjoyed the scramble through the fields.

"After all, Ethel's very well," thought Robert. "She's all right if people don't bully her."

At length she paused.

"Oh, Robert," she exclaimed, "we must not go through that next field; that is where the gipsies are, and Aunt said that we were never to go near them."

"We need not speak to them," he replied; "surely we may walk through the field if we like; the gipsies won't interfere with us, if we don't with them."

"We had better turn," she continued, "Aunt would rather we kept right out of the field, I have heard her say so."

"*You* can if you like," answered Robert; "I am going on; the others are enjoying

themselves, and I don't see why we should not enjoy our walk."

Ethel considered; his last sentence had weight with her.—Yes, the others were enjoying themselves; why should not she? Again she felt jealous of her brother and cousins. "Why should they, who had not tried any harder to be good than she had herself, have a treat, and she not take the walk she wished." She knew why, but she did not wait to say to herself, "because it will be an act of disobedience, if I do."

Robert saw the advantage that he was gaining, and continued; "you know, Ethel, Mamma only meant that we were not to speak to the gipsies; she would be the very first to say that we could go along the path at the other end of the field: and then, when we have crossed it, I'll take you such a jolly walk."

Robert caught hold of Ethel's hand, and she allowed him to lead her over the forbidden ground. She knew that she was doing wrong, but still she had not sufficient

strength of purpose to refuse, and Robert's words kept on recurring to her, "the others are enjoying themselves, why should not we?" They had not gone far when a gipsy came towards them.

"There's a handsome little gentleman and a nice little lady," she said, looking at them through her large black eyes, "there's happiness in store for them, I can see: tho' maybe one of 'em has a great deal of sorrow buried away somewhere deep now, tho' she is young. Just you cross this hand with a bright little coin, and I'll tell you what's in store for you both; the little gentleman's not got much to try him, I should say, and he's very determined when he makes up his mind to a thing."

The children's attention was riveted: Ethel never paused to think why the gipsy should fancy her unhappy. She did not remember at the time that a pale, care-worn little face, and a frock of deep black, would tell of trouble, to one even less penetrating than the gipsy woman was by

trade; and she thought that if she knew that she was unhappy now, perhaps she was right when she foretold happiness to come, and Ethel longed to know more.

Robert, also, had not been unobserved by the gipsy. She had seen him in the other field arguing with Ethel, and she had noticed how he had prevailed, and then led his cousin whither it was evident she did not wish to go; and as Ethel had looked sad, so had Robert looked happy, and their characters were not hard to decipher.

But all this did not enter the cousins' heads, and they were quite sure that the gipsy knew all about them; and they were now anxious to have their fortunes told. Robert was the first to speak.

"I should like to hear mine, shouldn't you, Ethel?" he asked.

"I think we had better not," she answered: "Aunt will be angry if we do."

"Oh! nonsense," said Robert, "what can it matter to her, whether we have our fortunes told or not. I'm going to, so you

had better do the same.—How much will it be?" he asked, turning towards the gipsy.

"I'll tell your's and the little lady's for one shilling the two," she answered, taking hold of Ethel's hand: "there's plenty to read in that," she continued; "just give me a bright piece, and let me cross it—you'll not be sorry when you've heard all, I 'm sure."

Ethel shook her head, "I cannot disobey Aunt," she said, "so do not ask me, Robert."

"You have done that already, Ethel," answered her cousin, "by coming into the field at all; and if you won't have your fortune told, I shall tell her you brought me here, and begged me to come; and you know who she'll believe, fast enough; but if you do as I say, I'll tell Mamma that it was my fault, and then she will not scold us."

"I would rather not," again said Ethel.

"Then you know what to expect: and remember what the next punishment is to be; Harold is to come out of the next room to yours into mine. I want awfully to have

the little fellow, and if you do not oblige me now, I'll get him."

Poor Ethel! she came out to please Robert when she wished to stay at home, and what was it all leading to now? If she had only resisted the first temptation, and not come into this field at all. But she had even felt a degree of pleasure in yielding to Robert's persuasions, because he had reminded her of the pleasure that the others were having. Now it was so hard to be firm, Robert seemed to persuade so easily to do what was wrong, that she could not bear even to entertain the thought of Harold's sleeping with him, and being under his influence;—Harold, who was so easily led one way or another. What was Ethel to do? She knew that Robert would have no difficulty in making his Mamma remove Harold from the neighbourhood of her room if he wished her to do so, and this he threatened, if she did not now yield to his wishes.

"Why need I have my fortune told,

Robert," she still asked timidly: "you cannot care whether I do or not."

"Yes I do," he said, really at heart a coward, and unwilling to face the gipsy alone: "I care very much; besides, I've got no tin, and I want you to pay for both, and then I'll give it you back again when we get home."

"I've only eleven pence left," said Ethel, "I had a shilling, and then I gave Harold a penny, and now I must keep that, Aunt told me that I was to save my money."

"Well, I'm going to pay you back half," he said, "so you won't spend much, and I dare say the gipsy will take eleven pence when we tell her that we have not got any more, and that will be cheap.—Fancy, Ethel, two fortunes for eleven pence; why, they're generally a shilling each."

"That they are, young gentleman," now chimed in the gipsy, "and if you're very quick I'll take the money, but if not, I can't tell the fortunes at all to-day."

"Be quick, Ethel," whispered Robert,

"she'll be off directly, and then it will be too late."

How Ethel wished it might be so. Another thought came into her mind, to dissuade her from obliging Robert. She had heard her Uncle speak of the gipsies, and say how he disliked them and their prattles. Was this trying to please him, doing what she knew he disapproved of? Oh, no, and she would have given anything to do as he wished, and run right out of the field, and then tell her Aunt, if she had dared, as she would have told her mother, that she had disobeyed her once by travelling forbidden ground, but that she was very sorry now; yet she dare not do this, for she and Harold were so completely in Robert's power, and she was so anxious to shield her little brother, so she did evil that good might come; and when Robert once more held out his threatenings, she allowed him to put his hand into her pocket and draw out her purse. He counted her money and paid it to the gipsy.

"That's a good little girl," said the old woman, "perhaps I had better tell her fortune first," and having already discovered from their conversation enough of Ethel's character and history to know her weak points, she continued:—"She's an affectionate little girl, I'm sure, and she's got a little brother that she loves better than anyone else in the world. She's very unhappy sometimes, and people are often cross to her, but that'll all come right some day and she'll be happy again. The next time she comes this way I'll see her hand once more, and then I'll tell the happiness that's in store for her, and when it's all to be. She knows enough for to day, and she's a little orphan, I know, and has never had anyone to love her since her poor mother died, but some day she will again: and the next time she comes this way, the old gipsy will tell her who."

Robert listened very intently.

She has told Ethel's fortune capitally, he thought, I wonder what she'll say to me,

and as he thrust his hand into her's, she began:—

"This little genl'man hasn't much to trouble him. He's got capital spirits and a strong will too; he likes to have his own way, and he's got a Mamma who spoils him. He's fond of cricket and foot-ball, —and he'll be a great man some day. Now he'd like to go into the army, but maybe he'll change his mind again in a year or two's time; when some great event will take place, in which he will play a great part."

Robert was quite excited; that the gipsy knew everything, past, present and future, he felt quite certain, and he longed to know more, but here she stopped.

"What will happen in a year or two's time?" he asked quickly.

"I must not tell you that to-day," she answered, "the next time you pass this way, just come to the old gipsy woman again, and for quite a trifle she'll tell you both more, and make you very happy."

Robert almost promised to come again soon, but Ethel remained silent. Wishing the gipsy "good-bye," they moved away.

"I say, Ethel," he exclaimed, "I wonder what the time is, we have been out an age, and we're an awful distance from home. Won't Mamma be in a *wax*, that's all, you're being out so late, but we can't help it now: we must get back as quick as we can. You were such a confounded time making up your mind to fork out that money—but wasn't the old gipsy clever? How in the world could she guess that I wanted to go into the army? I wonder what this other thing is that she's going to tell us. I shall go back and hear, shan't you?"

"No, Robert, I don't think I shall. I am so sorry that we went at all, because I know that it was disobedient."

"What nonsense, Ethel. It was an awful spree, and we needn't say a word about it. If we're asked where we have been—oh! for a walk in the fields, and we've seen nobody and met nobody;—do you remember, Ethel?

Mind, if you say a word about it, I shall put it all on you, and look out for Harold. I warn you, you're not to tell a soul that we've been near the gipsies. Do you hear?"

"I cannot tell a story, Robert: it will make it ever so much worse."

"Tell a story! who wants you to? No one's going to ask if we've seen the gipsies; and even if they do, what's easier than to say 'no'?"

"Oh Robert, I could not tell a falsehood: God would be angry if I did."

"You had better tell the truth then, and let Harold sleep with me to-night. It would be an awful lark to have the little fellow in my room: I'd rise up no end of ghosts and make them appear."

"If you frightened Harold, I should tell Uncle," exclaimed Ethel, now really angry, "you shall not frighten Harold whatever you do."

"Tell Uncle indeed! but if I tell Mamma first? I do not mind telling a few crams,

you know, and a very few go a long way with her."

"I wish I had never come out with you," sobbed Ethel: "you are a wicked, cruel boy, and I'll never go out with you again."

"You had better be civil, Ethel: or I won't pay you back the money I owe you," was the retort. "I am not sure now that I shall," he murmured, under his breath.

Ethel sighed; but she did not care so much for this; it was Harold, and Harold only who troubled her now. If she herself could alone be punished, she would conceal nothing, tell no falsehood, and not mind what Robert said to his Mamma: but her cousin's threat, if she displeased him, to get Harold into his room, and then frighten him, made Ethel very undecided. She made no answer. They were approaching the house, and Ethel involuntarily held back. What was she to do? Must she tell a falsehood? She could not bear the thought, and if her Mamma had been alive, she would never have dreamt of doing so. No, she

would say nothing unless questioned, but if asked where they had been, she would tell the truth, so she determined.

"Be quick, Ethel," said Robert, "and mind, we've been for a walk in the fields, but not near the one where the gipsies are."

The street door was open when they reached it. Ethel, to her great delight, did not see her Aunt. She ran up stairs. Little Lilla came to her room.

"Oh Ethel," she said, "where have you been, Mamma is so angry that you stayed out so late. We've had a lovely drive, and Mamma has bought Harold a toy, —I am so glad—it is such a beauty."

"Is it?" asked Ethel, in a careless tone, as if it made very little difference to her whether Harold had a toy or not. But still she did notice what the little girl said; and at that moment Ethel was thinking that, after all, her Aunt might be kinder than she fancied, and if she did love Harold, she would never allow him to be frightened at night. Again she made a resolution

that she would speak the truth. Then Harold came in.

"Look Ethel," he said, displaying his toy. "Isn't it a beauty? Aunt gave it me. And she has been so kind, I don't believe she's as bad as we thought," he continued, kissing his sister. "I wished so much that you had been with us to-day, but I've lots to tell you, and I've kept it all for to-night before we go to bed."

Again Ethel's determination wavered: come what might, she could not part with Harold. To have him with her, was her only pleasure, and Harold might learn to be so wicked, if he were continually thrown with Robert.—Yes, Ethel, for the first time in all her life, resolved beforehand, even before the temptation assailed her, to tell a lie. She did not stop to remember, that God, Who had forbidden to do evil that good might come, had it in His Almighty power to avert the evil if she did the good; or that He could even bring the very evil which she tried to avert, as

a punishment for her sin. Ethel was very young, and she did not think of all this, and she loved Harold so dearly, that to save him as she thought, she would even grieve her God. Ethel kissed Harold tenderly.

"Darling little fellow," she said: "how well you look to-day."

They went down stairs to tea: little Lilla was holding Ethel's hand.

"I think I love you as much as Harold," she whispered to her, "do you love me, Ethel?"

"Yes, Lilla," she answered, stooping to fondle with grateful affection the little girl, who had already entwined herself round Ethel's heart, "I love you very much."

"I'm going to try to be good," said the little girl, "do you think Mamma will let you teach me? Harold told me what you said about being good, and loving God; and I want you to teach me the same, will you?"

At any other time Ethel would have assented with warm words to her cousin's

request, but now, she could only stoop down and kiss her again, while she simply said, "if I can teach you anything, Lilla, I shall be very glad to do so."

She felt at that moment so unequal to the task. How could she teach another? when she was even then stepping down stairs with the determination, if tempted, of telling a lie: although she knew that she would thereby offend that loving SAVIOUR, Who has said by the HOLY GHOST, that "liars are an abomination to Him." Ethel did not weigh those words. To be an abomination to the GOD whom she really loved so dearly, and whom she had, so short a time back, determined to serve, would have seemed terrible to her had she thought on the words; but she did not, nor did she realize fully the help that might have been her's to resist temptation, had she but sought it. She felt herself powerless now, after all Robert's cruel threatenings. Had she but leant on her SAVIOUR then, and determined to please

Him, even though she might offend her cousin, and bring down heavy punishment upon herself and her little brother, all would have been well; but her heart was divided, and with many conflicting thoughts struggling within her breast, she entered the dining-room. Robert was already seated at the table.

"Mind what you're about," he whispered as she past him: "Mamma's in an awful rage already."

"We will have tea at once," said Mrs. Ellis, as she now came in, "it is getting late.—How is it that you were not home sooner, Ethel? You know that I do not like your remaining out so late."

"We went for a long walk, Aunt," answered Ethel.

"Robert tells me that you have been in the fields, in which ones did you walk?"

She enumerated all but the last one that they had entered.

"Did you go into the gipsies' field, at all?" was the next question. Ethel

met Robert's eye fixed upon her across the table.

"No," she answered; and Ethel herself only knew the sorrow that she felt, when she told the first deliberate lie that had ever passed her lips."

"I am glad of that," said her Aunt: "but I am surprised, also," she added "for Robert is so fond of having his own way, that I wonder when once so far, that he obeyed me and did not go on."

Again Ethel longed to confess the truth, but she saw Robert glance towards Harold.

"What made you so long, then, if you only walked in three fields. Elizabeth tells me that you went out almost directly after we did."

"We took another walk first," said Robert, afraid to trust Ethel any longer: "we went down the grove, and then into the fields."

"Did you go down the grove as far as Mr. Berne's house?" asked Mrs. Ellis, of Ethel.

"No," was the short reply. This was not a lie in itself, but it was a deception, and acquiescing in a lie, and Ethel felt that she was very wicked, but she did not know what to do now; she had already yielded herself so completely into Robert's power.

Here the conversation dropped. Ethel was glad of it; and she tried in vain to feel interested when her cousins spoke on other subjects. Presently Mr. Ellis himself joined them. At any other time, this would have made Ethel happy, but now his presence only added to her grief. Had she not disobeyed him, who had been so kind to her; had she not only that morning promised him that she would try to be good, and please her Aunt, and what was she doing now? Poor Ethel! Every fresh step that she took in misdoing seemed to make matters worse, and to cause her more pain and uneasiness.

"I want change for half-a-crown," he said, turning towards his wife. "Can you give it me? A boy has just brought a parcel

and there's one and sixpence to pay for it." Mrs. Ellis took out her purse.

"No, I cannot," she said: "but Ethel has a shilling, and I can let you have sixpence. Lend that to your Uncle, Ethel, will you," she continued, turning towards her.

The child looked confounded. One lie is generally the forerunner of others. One told, another follows to conceal the falsehood. She had no time for reflection.

"My purse is up stairs, Aunt," she said.

"Then go and fetch it."

"I do not know where it is," she continued, "I have lost it, and I do not think that I could find it now," and again she looked towards Robert. Mr. Ellis noticed the sign he made to her.

"Not find it, that is very strange.—You must be very careless with your purse."

It was true that Ethel had lost her purse, though she did not know that she had, for it had dropped in the field, when she had paid the gipsy all that it contained.

"Oh, by the bye, that reminds me," said

Mr. Ellis, forgetting for the moment the subject of the money, "I picked up a purse to-day. I came home across the fields, and in the one where the gipsies are, I found a very pretty one, but it was quite empty. Ah! thought I, the gipsies have been at work here. That pretty purse has been emptied to pay them for their stories. I look upon these people as such a bad set, that I felt quite pleased, when I saw them this evening, to think that I had forbidden my children to go near them."

Ethel's hand went instinctively into her pocket. No, her purse was not there:—what if this should prove to be really hers? Her Aunt knew it quite well. Mr. Ellis produced it.

"Why, Ethel, that is your purse, how came you to lose it? Are you quite sure," she asked, turning to her husband, "that you picked it up in the field where the gipsies are? because Ethel told me that she had not been there."

"I am quite sure," was the reply: "but

we must settle this afterwards: has no one the money I asked for? The children fetched it, and Mr. Ellis took a seat at the table. Ethel had burst into tears; she could refrain from doing so no longer.

"You may well cry, you naughty girl," said her Aunt, "you have disobeyed me to-day, and told lies into the bargain; you shall be punished for this. I have a good mind to send you out of the house altogether."

Ethel sobbed so violently that she could not speak.

"Obstinate again!" said her Aunt; "you make no apologies; you offer no excuse. Perhaps you will leave off shielding Ethel now," she continued, looking at her husband. "She has disobeyed me deliberately, and has told falsehood upon falsehood into the bargain."

"Hush!" said Mr. Ellis, peremptorily to his wife. "Come here, Ethel," he said, kindly, "and explain all this."

"I did go into the gipsies' field, Uncle,"

she said, "and"—almost choking—"I did know I oughtn't."

"You wicked child," exclaimed Mrs. Ellis, "first you disobey me, and then you hide your fault with a lie."

Ethel was very miserable. Her own conscience, and the stern look which her Uncle fixed upon her, went much farther to grieve the poor little weak follower of the Cross, than all the harsh words which her Aunt could heap upon her.

"Oh Uncle, I am so very sorry," she said again and again, "I never meant to be so wicked."

"What made you go into those fields, Ethel," asked Mr. Ellis, "did you not know that I had forbidden it,—who took you?"

Ethel looked down: she avoided answering the last question.

"Yes," she stammered, "I remembered that you had forbidden it."

"Who went with you?" again asked Mr. Ellis. Ethel was silent.

"I think she persuaded Robert to go

with her," was Mrs. Ellis' answer, when she found herself obliged to speak; "I suppose she was afraid to do wrong alone, and so she induced another to disobey with her."

"Did you go with Ethel?" asked Mr. Ellis, turning round and fixing a severe look on his son.

"Yes," answered Robert, "Ethel asked me to, and then I did."

"You see," said Mrs. Ellis, "I told you how it was."

"Is this really the case, Ethel?" asked her Uncle again. She would not say, for she would not cast the blame upon Robert, even to screen herself: so it all rested upon her.

"I am very much grieved, my child," her Uncle said, still kindly, "that you should be so naughty, and that you should add to it all by telling lies. I thought you a good child once, but I'm afraid I cannot again." He moved away from her, and left the room. Ethel stood alone, sobbing bitterly.

"Good, indeed," muttered her Aunt, "you're a little hypocrite, and as bad a girl for your age as I know. You're not a fit companion for your cousins, nor for your little brother either; and if I find you doing these things again, I shall send you to a boarding school."

How Ethel wished that her Aunt would, if Harold might only go also. Robert went up to her.

"So you did tell after all my warnings," he whispered, "look out for your punishment, I'll see that it's a good one, for your disobeying me."

"As it is," continued Mrs. Ellis, "I shall think of some punishment that you will really feel."

Harold, who was crying himself, now went up to his sister, and put his arm round her neck. He kissed her over and over again, and shed as bitter tears as Ethel herself did.

"I am sure Ethel has not told a story," persisted the little fellow: "Mamma always

said she spoke the truth; I believe Robert has himself."

"Hush, Harold," whispered Ethel, through her tears. "Robert will be angry with you if you say that."

"I am sure Ethel doesn't do you much good," said Robert, his anger now up: "I heard her talking to him ever so long last night, Mamma: I believe when she goes to bed she tells Harold not to like you."

"Very probably," said Mrs. Ellis, "but I can soon settle that; it's rather a good idea of yours, Robert, to mention it just now. Your punishment, Ethel, shall be that Harold does not sleep near you any more."

"Oh Harold," she exclaimed, folding her arms tightly round her little brother—"If dear Mamma had only lived!—But God is good, Harold," she exclaimed, expressing her thoughts aloud, without any reference to anyone else then present; "God is good, and will take care of you if you say your

prayers when you go to bed, and no one can really harm you then.'

"Oh! Aunt, dear Aunt," said Harold, in his eagerness, running towards her, "Do forgive Ethel this time, look how sorry she is."

"You know what you said, Mamma," put in Robert, "that the next time Ethel did wrong, Harold should sleep with me."

Ethel cast an angry look at her cousin, but refrained from speaking.

Was it for this that she yielded and entered the forbidden field, and then against her will had had her fortune told? Was it for this that she had uttered a falsehood, when it had grieved her conscience to do so? And was it for this that she had received all the blame, and screened him who had brought so much grief upon her? No, Robert, this was undeserved. Ethel had sinned greatly, though this was a hard return for all that she had done for you; but her patient endurance now was to please One whom she had offended, but

One who had already pardoned His penitent child, and Who was even then smiling npon her, and bidding her go bravely on, and bear patiently that Cross which in His Almighty Power, and partly in punishment for her sins, He had seen fit to lay upon her."

"Yes," said Mrs. Ellis, "I know what I threatened, and Ethel deserves the punishment."

"Oh! Aunt," she pleaded, "do, do, forgive me this time," and she was almost tempted then to tell all: but no, the fear of consequences had made her act the part of a coward once; with God's help it should not make her do so again.

No forgiveness was granted to her, and Ethel was sent to bed alone: Harold followed her to the door, but was forcibly kept back. Then Robert promised him all sorts of treats if he would sleep with him; and they told the child so often how very naughty Ethel had been, and that it was better for him not to be so much with her;

that at last he listened to them;—not that Harold really could believe anything against his sister, but when one and all called her so wicked, he thought it very strange. Ethel obeyed her Aunt, and went up to bed alone. How her poor little heart ached, and how she pined and yearned for sympathy. Her head too, pained her terribly, and she felt quite bewildered. Was she very wicked? Every one said that she was: yes, and she believed it herself; she knew that she had that day done much that was wrong, but she knew also, for her Mamma had often told her, that when she had been sorry for her faults, GOD forgave every sin repented of; and the lonely child felt this. She was sure that although her Aunt was unmerciful, her SAVIOUR was not; and closing the door as she entered her room, she flung herself in an agony of tears on her knees. How long was this to last? she wondered. How long would she go on yielding to temptation because she feared those who were her tempters?

And how long would she feel so very, very miserable? Ethel did not know, but she poured out her little soul before GOD, and prayed Him to have mercy on her. Even Harold, for whose sake she had committed her sin, she yielded now almost fearlessly into the hands of her LORD, and she prayed for him fervently, to be kept from harm. She saw now how fruitless it was to do evil that good might come. The very punishment that Ethel had in sinning tried to avert, had come upon her in consequence of her sin. She was but a little girl, but she had learnt to-day that it is worse than folly to go aside from the right path for any reason, and that we are only really safe when following in the footprints of our BLESSED LORD, and gaining His smile. Ethel went to bed, but she did not sleep. She was thinking of her brother, when presently she heard a little footstep on the stairs.—Harold entered the room noiselessly. He came up to his sister, and asked her in a whisper, if she were asleep.

"No, Harold," she said, "and I am going to lie awake all night to listen, so that if you are frightened and call out, I shall hear you."

"Oh I shan't be frightened, Ethel," he answered: "I am very sorry to leave you, but it's rather fun to sleep with Robert. He's given me lots of jolly things already."

"I am glad he is kind to you, Harold, but mind you say your prayers; I don't believe he does say his."

"Of course I shall, Ethel," was the hurried answer, "I never forget them; I must go now, though," he added, "or Aunt will be cross. I have been trying to come for such a long time."

As Harold kissed his sister, and wished her "good night," he said softly to her, "you didn't really tell that story, Ethel, did you?—I keep saying that you didn't, but they won't believe me," and then the little fellow bounded off. He did not wait for her reply, for he thought that he heard his Aunt on the stairs. For some

time longer Ethel lay quite still, then she heard voices again. It was her little brother who spoke, as he was going to bed with Robert.

"I am just going to say 'good night,' to Ethel," she heard him say, "I must kiss her before I go to bed."

"No, Harold," you must not go to-night, Mamma said that you were to go straight to bed. It's so like a girl to be always kissing."

Harold still lingered outside the door.

"Don't be such a little muff," said Robert, again, "she'll begin to give you a sermon if you go in there; you're a regular baby."

Harold was persuaded against his will, and leaving his sisters's door with a heavy heart, he entered the other room.

Harold was a very little boy, but he had that in him, so characteristic of boys, and even men. He liked to be thought great and strong, but he was lacking in moral courage.

Ethel's door was open, but she was quite quiet; so Robert thought she slept. For hours she lay awake to listen as she had said: but she did not hear Harold's voice. Robert had no intention of frightening him that night; and he thought, to, that if he made Harold like to sleep with him at first, it would serve his purpose better; so he did all in his power to amuse the little fellow. Before jumping into bed, Harold, as a matter of course, knelt down and said his evening prayers.

Robert burst out laughing; still Harold knelt on, his face burning the while with shame, and it was with a great effort that he managed to say them: but still he knew what was right, and he loved God, and liked to please Him.

"You are a little muff," said Robert, as Harold rose, "You don't mean to say you always do that of a night."

"Yes, I do," said Harold. "and Ethel says that it is very wicked to go to bed without saying my prayers."

"Ethel's wicked herself," answered Robert, "and she doesn't know. Girls say their prayers, but it's an awfully babyish thing for boys to do. I wouldn't for anything, and you'll be laughed at well, if ever you go to school and are so silly."

Harold listened to Robert's words, and pondered them over.

In the morning he awoke very early, long before Robert, and he rose and said his prayers before his cousin was awake. He thought he would get them over before Robert could see him, as he did not like to omit them altogether, even were it girlish to say them. Poor little fellow! He did not think that he was already commencing to be ashamed of CHRIST, Who had once said that, of those who were ashamed of Him, He also would, one day, be ashamed.

Chapter III.

THE GHOST.

THE next day Ethel was still in disgrace. Robert never spoke to her, and he managed to keep Harold as much away from her as possible. The children were all forbidden to talk to her. Ida willingly obeyed: Ethel was no favorite of hers, for she had inherited her mother's jealous disposition, and was angry at the notice that her father took of Ethel. Little Lilla, alone, clung to her in her sorrow: she still believed Ethel to be good,

and could not imagine why every one was so unkind to her.

Ethel tried to avoid her Uncle: of all people in the house, she both loved and feared him the most. When evening came on, Ethel was again sent to bed. She was to go up early for three nights. Still Harold slept in the room with Robert: he asked to be allowed to go up with Ethel, as he was anxious to be in bed before Robert went. Having to say his prayers in his presence again, had been weighing upon the little boy's mind all day; but he did not obtain the permission he desired. He said he was tired, but this was looked upon as an excuse to be with Ethel, so the request was denied, and an hour later Robert offered to go up with him.

He lingered over all he had to do as long as possible to put off the evil hour: then he went to his bedside, determined not to be afraid of Robert, and to say his prayers. But then the latter spoke.

"Are you going to be a girl again to-night?" he asked jeeringly.

Harold was moved from his purpose, and jumped into bed.

"I'll get out again and say them when Robert's asleep," he said to himself, by way of excuse: "I'll not give them up altogether." And so he did.—The little fellow strained every nerve to keep awake, and, true to his purpose, he rose when Robert slept, and said his prayers. This quieted his conscience, but if he had consulted Ethel, she would have told him that it could not please His God. But he did not ask Ethel. He was already beginning to feel Robert's influence; and although he still loved his sister as dearly as ever, he thought it silly to tell her everything: he felt that she would be angry if she knew half that Robert said to him; and was ashamed that she should: so, when the next day she asked him if he had said his prayers. he simply answered, "yes."—Evening after

evening came, morning after morning:—Harold never thought now of kneeling to say his prayers while Robert was awake: and when, in the morning, he slept on late himself, he would put them off until later in the day, when he could be alone; till, by degrees, he gave up the practice of rising again at night to kneel down and pray; and as he lay in bed, he would repeat his prayers sleepily and carelessly; then, later, he fell asleep too quickly and forgot them altogether. This much Robert had accomplished. He had caused one little lamb, for whom CHRIST had shed His precious Blood, to cease from praying to Him; he had robbed one little follower of that LORD of the greatest blessing and help he could find in this world of temptation; and he had called down upon himself a heavy curse, not only for sinning, but causing another, and that a little one, to sin also.

A week passed, and Ethel had tried very hard to do her best and to please every one.

Her Uncle had forgiven her, and was again kind: but still he could not make her out. Ethel was a strange contradiction, and he could not understand why so good and gentle a child should have wilfully disobeyed him, and then have been untruthful. But still Ethel explained nothing, and silence did seem to confirm her guilt.

Now she was working very hard at her books. The holidays were approaching, and Ida and Ethel were going to be examined, as to the progress they had each of them made. Both were very anxious to do their best, as Mr. Ellis had promised a prize for the one who gained most marks. Harold went to school now, as Robert had asked his Mamma to allow him to accompany him there. The little fellow was delighted that his big cousin made so much of him. Ida's disposition was very different to her brother's; there was nothing mean in Ida's nature, and although she was selfish, and always wished to be first, she would never stoop to a mean

action in order to be so. Ethel won the prize, and Ida's unkind feelings towards her cousin increased in consequence, and her manner grew still colder towards her: this was enough to bruise Ethel's affectionate heart. She loved Ida very dearly, and often longed, aye, even prayed, that her affection might be returned. Sometimes, after Ethel had done much for her cousin, and had practised much self-denial herself, Ida would become more affable, and Ethel would be happy. But this change was only momentary, and after listening to her mother's comments upon Ethel, for a short time, Ida would again feel that there was nothing in her either to like or admire. Under the present circumstances, Ethel felt that she would far rather not have gained the prize; but then she ought to have done her best, she knew that. Poor child! even when she tried to be good, and worked hard, her very industry seemed to tell against her. True, she had pleased one—her Uncle had kissed her, and said that she

was a good girl again; but Mrs. Ellis never praised her niece, she seemed to dislike her more and more; and since the affair of the gipsies, Ethel had not been allowed to be much with her.

"I shall give you a prize, Ida," she said to her daughter one afternoon, when she had heard who had won the other, and felt very angry in consequence. "The idea of Miss Barnes shewing such preference to Ethel, because she has taken a fancy to the girl. But perhaps," she added, "Miss Barnes may have had nothing to do with it, and Ethel may have cheated. I am sure after what we witnessed the other day, she is equal to anything."

This afternoon Ethel was present. She said nothing, but a tear trickled silently down her cheeks, as she contrasted her position now to what it had been some time back. Brought up by a firm, loving, and judicious mother, Ethel and Harold had then always striven to do right, from a desire to please their parents, and God, whom,

from their infancy, they had been taught to love. An action well done, or a temptation resisted, had, in former times, procured a blessing for the little ones who had striven to obey, but now harsh words and angry looks seemed Ethel's only recompense. She pined for love: to obtain a little from her Aunt or Ida, the poor child would have toiled day and night. Even now her one aim was to give her Aunt satisfaction, although when she was good, she seemed to be hated the more. Mrs. Ellis was not blind to the fact, that, although at times, like other children, Ethel was naughty, she was still wonderfully obedient and forbearing: and this annoyed her, for she could not punish her for rudeness, when Ethel was not rude, and to be continually put to shame, as in truth she was, by this niece of her husband's, sorely tried her.

Even Harold's love seemed turning cold. He had so many friends at school, and such a seemingly stedfast one in Robert at home, that he had very little time to think

much of Ethel now. She observed the change in her little brother, and feared greatly for him as she noticed Robert's growing influence over him. Lilla, alone, was a comfort to Ethel: the affectionate child would often sit on her cousin's knee when she was alone, and then, as she had promised, she, who was such a child herself, would teach Lilla the Holy things that her mother had taught her; and when Ethel's sweetness and forbearance were lost upon all others, little Lilla, was unconsciously learning from her many a lesson, and would even now try to imitate the good example so set her.

Harold was now regularly installed in Robert's room. The latter was proud of his little cousin, and to have him entirely in his power, and to do with him as he liked, was his great aim. He saw how determined and high-spirited Harold naturally was, and so he went wisely to work, and at first only coaxed him, except when he did what was quite as effectual,

jeered him, and called him a girl. Robert's conscience had once or twice smitten him since Ethel had been so blamed for what really he had done: but these thoughts, when they came, had little other effect than to make him still more bitter against the innocent cause of his scruples, who herself added to them by her forgiving and kind manner to him.

"I say Ida," he said one day to his sister, after he had heard that Ethel had learnt her lessons better than his sister, "I shouldn't stand being beaten by her in a hurry. Why don't you pay her out? I'll help you, if you like."

"I do not want to pay Ethel out, Robert: I should be sorry to do anything to hurt her."

"Should you be sorry if any one did it for you?" he asked.—"Suppose you hand Ethel over to me."

Ida shook her head.

"Well, I shall give it her," he continued, I hate Ethel, I never hated any one in my life

before as I do her, and I've a splendid plan to pay her out. I've had it in my mind for a long time, but it hasn't been convenient till now."

"I had rather you did not hurt Ethel on my account," was Ida's answer, her conscience almost accusing her. "If I wished to annoy her, I could easily do so myself."

"But you said you were not going to: and I've made up my mind to it now, so it's no good saying any more," and with this he left the room.

Ida was a strange contradiction. Her heart was good, and, if it had not been for her mother, and her brother's bad example, she would have returned the love of the orphan girl, who was really so good to her, and who would have been her friend in the midst of enemies. Robert met Ethel in the hall. He seldom spoke to her now; when he did, it was generally to say something disagreeable. This evening he detained her as she was passing.

"I advise you to lock your door to-night," he whispered, "because something in the air seems to tell me that ghosts are about."

He said no more, and hurried on, looking quite delighted; and so he was, for he saw that his plan had succeeded, and that Ethel had taken in what he meant to convey. She had hoped that his late threat had been forgotten; but now she saw that he intended carrying it out. She went to bed that night with a heavy heart, fearing she hardly knew what. Once again, she entreated her Aunt to allow Harold to return to the room adjoining her's, but her request had been denied. She lingered long while she wished Harold "good-night," but as Robert stood by, she could say nothing to him. She lay awake for some time, listening for any sound to proceed from the boys' room. At last she heard a scream, and she knew that Robert was executing his cruel plan. With all Harold's real day-light courage, he was very much frightened of ghosts; and Robert had found this out.

After Harold had fallen asleep that night, and the gas had been put out in their room, Robert rose again, and went softly in search of a stick. This he secured, and fixed it close by Harold's bed, after having padded it, and covered it all over with something white. To this he attached a pale mask, and again threw a covering over the whole figure, only leaving the face visible. This, seen in the semi-darkness, had a ghastly appearance; and Robert was delighted with his success. He drew up the blind to allow the rays of the moon to rest upon the figure; and then, jumping into bed, he awoke Harold, calling him by name—"Harold," he whispered, in a trembling voice, "do awake, there's something so awful in the room."

The little fellow opened his eyes, and the figure seemed to be staring in his face. He was fearfully alarmed, and in his agony and terror, he screamed out one name—"Ethel." His sister heard it, and in a moment, she had sprung from her bed,

wrapped herself in her dressing-gown, and was at Harold's side. The ghost even frightened her, but she cared not for her own feelings, she thought only of Harold.

"You wicked boy," she said, addressing Robert;" how dare you frighten Harold like that? I shall tell Uncle to-morrow morning."

"You'd better," he said: "if you do, Harold shall see ghosts every night."

"He shan't," was the answer, "for he shall sleep near me again—come, Harold," she continued, speaking to the little boy, who, cold and trembling, was clinging to her, "you shall be with me to-night."

"Mamma said he wasn't to," broke in Robert; "I'll tell her you fetched him away,"

"I don't care what she said, or what you tell her," answered Ethel, almost hoarse with excitement and anger, "Harold shall not be treated like this."

"Look out what you're saying," was Robert's answer.

Harold said nothing, and suffered himself

—with his face still hidden in Ethel's embrace—to be led past the figure that had caused him so much alarm, into his sister's room.

"If you go," said Robert, to him, "I'll pay you out," but Harold was so terrified by what he had seen, that he feared nothing in perspective, as he would have done, remaining with Robert and sleeping in his room that night. As Ethel led him into her own room, she locked the door behind them. In her eagerness to shield her little brother, she forgot all else, and the consequences that what she was doing might entail upon herself.

"Don't be frightened now, Harold, darling," she said, as the little boy still clung to her, "it was not really a ghost. Robert had only made it to frighten you."

"No, he hadn't, Ethel," answered Harold, "it was a real ghost; Robert was afraid of it himself."

"Oh!. no, he wasn't: that was only pretence. Robert meant to vex me, and

dressed something up on purpose to make you scream."

"Robert can't bear you, Ethel," said Harold, his thoughts for a moment wandering from the ghost; "he is always saying things against you, and telling me that I am stupid to love you."

"And then you believe him, Harold. I don't think you love me half so much as you used to do, when we came here."

"Yes, I do indeed, Ethel," answered the little fellow; "but I do so many things now that you would not care to hear about, and so I do not tell you. Robert says that it is stupid to tell girls anything that happens at school."

"I hope you are not doing what is wrong, Harold; but I am afraid of it, because Robert is so wicked, and I know he wants to make you so too, but do not be led by him, Harold. Remember dear Mamma, and think how unhappy she would be if she could know that Robert made you naughty," and the recollection of her dearly-

loved mother brought tears into Ethel's eyes.

"Oh Ethel, what would Mamma say, if she knew that I never said my prayers now?"—asked Harold, almost sobbing aloud himself, "do you think that she would be very angry, if she knew that it wasn't my fault?"

"Do you not say your prayers now, Harold?" asked Ethel, in surprise. "It must be your own fault if you do not."

"I have left off saying them long ago," was the answer; "Robert said that it was girlish, and I thought that perhaps it might be, as he never said any himself."

"It is not girlish, Harold. Papa used to say his prayers, and so does Mr. Dalmer; and so do all good men and little boys too. Don't you remember the picture Mamma used to show us, of Samuel saying his prayers?"

"Yes, I remember now; but when I am with Robert I forget all that, and I am so afraid to disobey him."

Ethel could feel for her little brother, for she herself had known what it was to be in Robert's power, and to sin in consequence. "Harold," she said, "we must not be afraid of Robert. It is much worse to displease God, than to displease him; and after all Robert cannot really harm us when God is by."

She spoke at the moment what she really felt. Well would it have been for both the orphans, could they always have thought thus.

"I can't say my prayers in Robert's room," still argued Harold. "If I might sleep anywhere else, I should so like to begin again."

"I will ask Uncle to let you come back to your own little room," she said, "but if he does not let you, do not neglect your prayers, Harold, even if Robert laughs at you, for you will be sure to be naughty if you do."

"I will ask God to help me not to be afraid of Robert," again said Harold, with

half-decision, kneeling down as he spoke, to say those prayers that had been so long unsaid. He clasped his little hands together, bent his little head, and as his tears fell fast, he asked God to bless him: but still Harold did not resolve to be stedfast in future. Whilst he prayed, the image of Robert haunted him, and he felt sure, although he prayed for strength, that when once in his cousin's room again, he would not be able to pray.

Ethel knelt also, and side by side the orphans asked a blessing from above. Her prayers were more resolute than Harold's: she prayed for guidance for them both, and for power to be given to them, really to do what was right, when Robert tempted them to evil. And she longed for her prayer to be answered.—Then came "good-night," and, locked in each others embrace, the children fell asleep.

Chapter IV.

IDA HUMBLED.

WHEN Harold awoke the next morning, he could not at first remember what had happened; then all the events of the past night rushed back into his mind, and he began to dread the coming day. What would his cousin say to him? He would be sure to call him a baby now, and perhaps his Aunt would punish him for having slept in Ethel's room. But more than all, Harold feared the possibility of Robert's telling the boys at school about the ghost,

and what they would think of him if they knew all. When Ethel and Harold left Ethel's room that morning, Robert was awaiting them outside the door.

"Mind you don't say a word, either of you, of what you saw last night; or I'll pay you out—don't forget, Ethel, you know I can punish: and it won't be a bit of good you're telling Papa; for if you do get Harold out of my room, I'll find some other way to frighten him; for Mamma says that he's always to go to bed early with Lilla now, and he shall see ghosts every night, but if you promise not to say anything about it, I'll promise also never to frighten Harold again."

"Very well," said Ethel, "I won't say a word about it this time," and she was delighted so easily to obtain so good a promise from Robert in return, which promise she believed that he meant to keep, as she intended to keep hers.

"That's a bargain, then," said Robert, taking her hand as if to seal the contract;

"you say nothing of last night's disturbance, and I never frighten Harold again. If you break your word, I am at liberty to break mine also."

"Of course," said Ethel, "but if I keep mine, you must keep yours."

Robert assented, then turning to Harold, he said, "you mustn't tell a soul, either, that you saw a ghost last night; or I shall tell all the fellows at school that you cried out for your sister, and went to sleep in her bed; and won't they chaff you? and I shan't take your part, or help you with any of your lessons again; and besides that, if you say anything about me, I'll tell Mamma what Ethel said of her when she took you away last night."

Harold was weary of the conversation, and tried to push past Robert to go down stairs.

"Are you going to promise?" the tyrant asked again, catching hold of his arm: "remember Turner, in the fifth; wouldn't he be amused?" Harold's pale face became crimson.

"All right," he said: "I'll promise,—let me go now," and he hurried on.

"That's settled, then," said Robert; "I'll help you with your lessons to-day, and you needn't think again about the ghost, for I dressed it up myself, and only wanted to have a lark: I'm awfully sorry now, that I frightened you."

Harold believed what Robert said, and in spite of the fear with which he inspired him, Harold really liked his cousin now; and when in broad day-light he came to consider all, he thought that he must have been very silly to have been frightened last night; and the forgiving little fellow pardoned Robert for all that he had done. So once more Ethel and Harold were in Robert's power, pledged not to betray him. Mrs. Ellis looked very grave that morning as they entered the breakfast-room. She wished her children "good-morning:" she seldom kissed them:—Ethel, never.

"What was that noise in the night?" she asked, after they were all seated round

the table, "I heard some very loud talking after you should all have been asleep."

There was no answer.

"Who was speaking last night, after the gas was turned off?" she again asked.

Ethel would have said, "I was:" but then she had promised Robert not to tell of the ghost, and she was afraid of the questions that might follow if she confessed. She remained silent.

"I am not surprised that I receive no answer," continued Mrs. Ellis, "for I heard one voice louder than all the others, and that voice was yours, Ethel; and I might have known that when you do wrong, it is useless to ask you to own your fault. What were you doing so late last night?"

Ethel still was silent.

"Obstinate and sly as usual," said Mrs. Ellis: "if you do not give me an answer now, you shall be punished till you do. I heard you talking loudly, very late last night, and it is my impression that you

were quarrelling. Do any of you know what happened?" she continued, addressing them all. Robert was the first to answer. He had not even heard the noise, and knew nothing about it. Ida said the same, and it was true that she knew nothing: if she had known, she would have told the truth. Lilla had been fast asleep all night; and Harold said that he knew nothing about the noise.

It grieved Ethel to hear her little brother tell a lie so readily, but what could she do? Robert had indeed instilled deadly poison into the little boy, who, a few months back, would hardly have understood how to speak an untruth. She longed so to say what had really happened, and how she had, in spite of her Aunt's orders to the contrary, made Harold sleep with her last night; but then there was her promise to Robert, and dare she break that? If she did, she knew the consequences; and her Mamma had always told her that a promise was sacred. Ethel longed for advice. For

a girl so young, to be thrown amongst people who were continually doing what was wrong, with no one to advise her, when she herself was tempted and tried, was very hard; especially, whereas till so lately, she had carried her every trial and temptation, however trivial, to her mother, who loved to influence to good.

How Ethel wished that Mr. Dalmer lived near to her! She had always been so fond of him, and she knew how kindly he would counsel her, could she see him. But he was far away from her, and her Aunt knew no clergyman. True, she sent or took her children to church on Sunday; most of her friends did the same, but she never troubled herself about religion any farther than this. She never thought of teaching them herself about God, or Holy things; or even of telling their governess to do so; and the children, themselves, so long brought up in ignorance of everything pertaining to Salvation, would have been surprised now to have

been differently taught. With Ethel and Harold it had been otherwise. They had seen religion taught and practised at their home, Daily Service had been said at their Parish Church, and their mother had been a weekly Communicant. To be reverent in church had been a lesson often instilled by Mrs. Lenie, and she had influenced them to love there to worship GOD. She had taught them from their very infancy to lisp their prayers; and she had gradually explained the meaning of the great Gospel truths. To love GOD, and to do all in His Light and for His Glory, had been the motive from which she had wished them to act in everything, and the thought of the grief that she told them was felt by the Good Shepherd, when any lamb of His fold went astray, always brought tears into the eyes of her children when they had committed sin. It was not so much the fear of punishment, or of blame, that had caused these children to refrain from wrong-doing, as it was

the dread of offending their SAVIOUR, or disobeying their mother. How were things altered now! No wonder that Ethel felt the change, and yearned for love and sympathy.

Was she doing right now, to allow Harold so fearlessly to tell a lie without contradicting it? She knew that she was not, but then she was so afraid of Robert.

"It is very strange," said Mrs. Ellis, "that no one knows anything about this noise; you have all but one denied that you do, and Ethel, after my hearing her voice, could hardly say that she was innocent. As you were concerned in it, Ethel, I command you to say who you were speaking to, and what you were saying at so late an hour. Do you intend to obey me?" she added, in an angry tone, as Ethel still remained silent.

"I was talking," Ethel answered; "but I cannot tell you to whom, or what I said."

"I never knew such an impertinent

child in all my life," stammered Mrs. Ellis, rising in her fury, and boxing Ethel's ears. "Go to your room, and remain there until I send you word to leave it."

Ethel and Harold simultaneously burst into tears. The little boy was quite indignant. He ran to his sister's side. "You shan't beat Ethel again," he said, addressing his aunt. "Mamma never beat us; and Ethel does not deserve it." He kissed his sister as he spoke; but her tears only flowed the faster when she returned his embrace.

"Go to your room at once, Ethel," repeated her aunt; "and if you dare to speak to me again like that, Harold, I'll flog you."

"I shall go with you to your room, Ethel. Come on, it will be jollier up there," still sobbed the little fellow.

"You will remain where you are, Harold," said his aunt, catching hold of his arm, as she spoke, and, at the same time pushing her niece out of the room.

Ethel went slowly up the stairs, listening to Harold's violent sobs,—sobs more violent than she could remember to have heard, accompanied—poor little fellow! had she seen them—with bitterer tears than she had known him shed, since together they had wept at their mother's death-bed.

"Aunt is cruel," thought Ethel, as she ran into her room and shut the door behind her: "Harold and I are not even allowed to cry together."

She flung herself down upon the bed, and sobbed for an hour. She could not pray,—Ethel, with all her love for God, could not pray then. She felt so angry with her aunt,—she felt so bitter towards Robert, who was bringing so much misery upon herself, and upon her dear little brother. During that hour she heard nothing, and no one came near her. At length, when her head was still buried in the bed, she felt a gentle touch, and, looking up, she saw little Lilla at her side. The sight of the child brought fresh tears into Ethel's eyes.

"Don't cry, Ethy darling," said the little girl, who so dearly loved and admired her cousin, now, in spite of all that her mother could do or say. "Oh please don't cry any more."

"I can't help it, Lilla; I am so unhappy. It is so dreadful that no one loves me."

"I love you Ethy, and Harold loves you, and GOD loves you, because you said that GOD loved everybody who tried to be good; and you are very good, because you have told me so many beautiful things that I never heard before."

For a moment Ethel paused to think. Yes, she had taught Lilla something, and now Lilla was teaching her.

The words of her own little pupil recalled her better thoughts, and she drove rebellion away. GOD did love her, and why need she mind what her Aunt said? She ought to have prayed for her, instead of hating her; she ought to have asked GOD to bless her trouble to herself, and to make her

love Him more, instead of rebelling against His Will.

"Yes, Lilla," she answered, drawing her little friend towards her, "you are quite right. God does love us all, and so we ought not to mind even if people are unkind to us; but it is very hard to see your Mamma so kind to all of you, and loving"—she would have said, even Robert, but she checked herself, and only said,—"and loving you all so much, and hating me."

"I wish Mamma loved you also, Ethy. I cannot think why she does not."

Ethel did not know either, but she knew that it must have been for her good: and if she had been a little older, she might have thought that perhaps her trials were ordained to help her to resist the temptation that beset her, and that in learning to love her cousins, who were so much preferred to her, and in striving continually to please her Aunt, who so often found fault with her, she would in time trample under foot,

and crush entirely, that temptation to envy, which came between her soul and her Maker, in whose image it had been formed. In happier circumstances, the root of the sin might have lain hidden deeper, concealed away, and seldom brought to light, and then it would have grown with Ethel's growth, sadly marring her character. Now, daily, hourly, she strove against it. When she found it impossible to equal her brother and cousins in the eyes of others, she prayed to be taught to love them; and as she prayed, she tried hard herself to do so; and where love exists, envy cannot. So by degrees, this fault was being uprooted.—And her little brother, Harold, of whom she had once been jealous because his beauty attracted so much notice, she pitied now when she saw him led into so much that was wrong; and she loved him so dearly, and felt such anxiety for him, that she would have sacrificed herself to any amount to save him.

All this, and why Ethel was so tried,

she could not understand, but she placed her trust in her LORD and SAVIOUR, and she looked to Him to guide and save her, and, although at times her own weakness, and her love for her little brother caused her to err, still she suffered herself to be led by CHRIST, and "Whoso putteth his trust in Him, shall never fail." Temptation is ever rife, — when Ethel ceased from envying her brother, and loved him so devotedly,—her very love for him, and the anexiety which that love engendered, put a new stumbling-block in her way. Thus Satan is permitted to tempt; but, with every temptation, thanks be to GOD, for man, woman, and child, there is a way for escape.

All this, Ethel knew in part, and longed to know more fully, but she must bide her time, and the knowledge and grace that had already been given her, she must make good use of.

"I am so glad that you love me, Lilla," she said to her little companion; "you must

never leave off doing so; and when I am a better girl myself, I will try to teach you more, and then, perhaps, some day we shall be in Heaven together, and then you will see my Mamma. Oh! Lilla, how I wish you had known her, you would have loved her so much then."

Again Ethel's tears rushed into her eyes, and she took Lilla on her knee, and tried to be calm. Her eyes were swollen, and her head ached violently from weeping.

Lilla begged her not to cry any more.

"I think I must go now," she said, "or Mamma will be angry with me: but Ethy, I've forgotten the little prayer you taught me, and I want to say it,"

"Very well, Lilla," said Ethel; "kneel down, and say it now, if you have not said your prayers to-day." And the little girl obeyed, and Ethel knelt also, and said aloud with Lilla her prayer. They then repeated the Lord's Prayer, and Lilla went away.

Ethel felt much happier then, than she

had done before her little cousin came to see her. Many a time had Ethel been good and kind to Lilla, and now her kindness had met with a return. One, to whom she had, ministered, had, in time of her own need, ministered to her.

Another hour went by, and then another, and still Ethel sat alone. She wondered when her Aunt would send for her. She hoped that it would be soon, as she was so tired of being by herself.—And where was Harold all this time? Being punished too? She could not tell.—She heard nothing, even when she listened at the door. Presently, there were footsteps on the stairs. Two persons were outside her door, and one of them was wishing to enter her room.

"What was the noise last night, Robert," she heard Ida ask her brother in a low voice; "do tell me, I feel nearly certain that you had something to do with it."

"So I had," said Robert. "I was paying off a debt that I had owed for a long time.

Wasn't that honest?—And now, perhaps, your's is being paid too."

"I owe Ethel nothing but my love," said Ida, now defying her brother. "She has always been good to me, and I have always been unkind to her, and if I knew now what really did take place last night, I should tell Mamma."

"It's a good thing that you don't know then," was Robert's answer, "if you are such a sneak; I suppose you're being infected, and are growing good, like Lilla?"

Ida did not like to be told that she was growing good, but she was really sorry for Ethel now, and so let Robert say what he chose to her. She felt certain that Robert had done something to vex Ethel, and to bring her into disgrace; and what was more, from the words that he had spoken yesterday, she believed that she was herself partly the cause of his behaviour, and this made her sad now. On the whole, Ida's was a generous disposition, and if she had only been

rightly brought up, she might have been a very good girl. In many points, she resembled her father much more than her mother.

"I am not good," she said now, in answer to Robert's remark, "but I do not like to see Ethel punished so often, when she does not deserve it; and I am going in to her now, to ask all that happened last night, and I know she will tell me."

"No fear," said Robert; "I'm blowed if she will. She's too wise for that. I've seen to it, that nothing shall be told."

"Then you must have done something, Robert, if you have made Ethel promise not to tell; and when Papa comes home, I shall ask him to find it out."

"And I'll tell Mamma that you are in rebellion against her, and are trying to get Ethel off, and then you will see if you're allowed to complain to Papa. Besides, he is in long ago, and knows all about it from Mamma herself. I heard him tell her that

Ethel seemed a very bad girl, and that he had been quite mistaken in her."

"Poor Ethel," sighed Ida; "I do not believe that she is bad at all."

"Tell Mamma so yourself, then, but don't stop here telling me," he said, trying to push his sister from Ethel's door; the handle of which was already in her hand.

"I shall tell her when I have a chance," was the answer, spoken sharply; "but I am not going down now. I am going in to see Ethel."

"That you're not," he answered, and as he spoke, he pushed her from the door. But she would not be sent away thus.

"Well, you may go," he said, at last, when he saw that further resistance was useless; and when the door was opened, he added in a loud voice:—"It's quite safe: Ethel's too wise, and too fond of Harold to make me angry." And proud of his power, and vexed that one more should have gone over to the enemy, as he called siding with Ethel, he went away.

Ethel had overheard this conversation. It had been carried on in so loud a tone, that it would have been almost impossible not to have done so. The words—"Papa said that he had been mistaken in her," had caused her most pain, and when Ida entered, she was sobbing again. The former knew but little how to comfort any one in trouble. Naturally proud and reserved, accustomed to independent thinking and acting, she had lived so much to herself and her own mind, that it was now a difficult task to make the first advance or to seek to console another. And up till now, she had always treated Ethel so coolly, and had so learnt from her mother to despise her, that she felt nervous, unbidden, to enter her room. But still the girl's heart was good, and she could not help feeling that Ethel, who had always been so kind and forgiving to her, was suffering unjustly now, partly on her account; and this grieved Ida. The task she had set herself to perform was a difficult one, but

although she shrunk from it, she determined now to ask Ethel to love her, and to forgive her for all her past unkindness. It was the first time in Ida's whole life that she had tried to conquer one feeling of pride. It seemed as though her conscience had been aroused in answer to Ethel's prayers, offered so often for her, and offered so lately in union with her little sister's.

She stood still for a few minutes, contemplating her cousin's grief, and then she burst into tears herself."

"Don't, oh! don't cry so, Ethel, you will be quite ill if you do," sobbed the once proud girl, who now knelt at her feet. "I am—we are—at least Harold, Lilla, and I, are so sorry that you are punished, and we know that you did not deserve it," and throwing her arms round her cousin's neck, Ida kissed Ethel almost for the first time since she had been with her. "I am very sorry now, Ethel," she continued, "that I have ever been unkind to you,

but I never mean to be so again; and I came to ask you to love me, and let me love you too."

Ethel could not answer for her tears; but though she cried, she was not unhappy now, and she felt very thankful to God who had raised her up a friend in the midst of her troubles. The consciousness that Ida loved her, and desired her love, was a great comfort to the almost broken-hearted girl.

"I suppose you cannot forgive me," continued Ida, as Ethel made no answer; "but indeed I am sorry for all that I have done to you, more sorry than I have ever been about anything before; because you have always been so good to me; and I would do anything now to show you that I mean what I say." And the penitent Ida felt every word that she uttered, or she never could have uttered them.

"I am so glad that you love me," at length answered Ethel, still sobbing; I am so very glad, that it makes me cry all

the more, but I shall never be so unhappy again, if I may love you."

"And do you quite forgive me?" again asked Ida.

"I have nothing to forgive," said Ethel, "if I had, of course I should forgive you."

"Yes you have," said the other; "I have been very unkind to you, and I have spoken against you to Mamma; and I told Robert that I was angry because you had won the prize, and then he said that he should pay you out, and I believe he has done something to you now; but really, Ethel, I did not wish him to do this. Do you still forgive me?"

Ethel's answer was to kiss her cousin, and to assure her that she had never had any unkind feeling towards her, nor felt in the least angry with her.

"What did Robert do last night?" asked Ida, presently, "I want to know so much."

"He dressed"—Ethel began, and then stopped. She had forgotten for the moment that she must not tell, and that her promise

extended to Ida, as well as to her mother, or to any one else. "I mustn't tell," said Ethel; "I wish I might tell you."

"Did Robert make you promise?" she asked.

"Yes, I promised not to tell any one."

"And that is why you did not tell Mamma? Oh Ethel, how good you are; and then you are punished when Robert does wrong; but I shall tell Papa, and then he will make it all right."

"Oh! please don't," said Ethel, implornigly, and her face became white when she thought of the consequences if Robert were to be reprehended by his father. "Whatever you do, don't say a word about last night at all, or Robert will think that I have told you."

"I hate Robert," said Ida, vehemently. "He is a dreadful coward, and does all sorts of mean things, and Mamma encourages him. How you must hate him, Ethel, he is always putting Mamma against you."

"No, I don't hate him, but I cannot like

him though I try very hard to do so, and I often ask GOD to make me; but I do not hate any one. Mamma used to say that it was so wicked to do so, and that, if we did, we were not Christians, and CHRIST would not love us."

"But every one is a Christian," said Ida, "who is not a Jew or a Heathen, whether he hates or not."

"No, he isn't," answered Ethel; "Mamma was always telling me that only those are Christians who follow CHRIST, and copy His Example; and He loved everybody, and prayed for people who did Him wrong."

Ida might almost have been a Jewess, or a Heathen, for all that she knew of her LORD and His Holy Gospel. She questioned Ethel upon many subjects. What Ethel could answer and explain to her cousin, she did: she then lent Ida a little book of Sunday stories that she had, and in that she said that she would find a great deal about JESUS

CHRIST, much more than she could even tell her; "and if you love to read it all," she continued, "and believe in Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, He will love you, and make you good, and take care of you always in the dark. That is why I try not to be frightened when Aunt sends me up here alone, because Our LORD is here, and the Angels, and they take care of me. That was how I knew that it was not a real ghost last night, because I was sure that GOD would not let it come to frighten us, but that Robert"—and here Ethel paused. What had she done? She had broken her promise unwittingly. In her earnestness she had spoken out her own thoughts, and had revealed that, on which she was pledged to silence, without intending it, but she could not recall her words. What could she do now? What would Robert do next if he knew? Had she committed a great sin in not keeping her word? He might ask her if she had told Ida, and then

what could she say? Poor Ethel!—with all her heart she wished her last half-sentence unsaid.

"Did Robert dress up a ghost then?" asked Ida at once; "and was that the noise Mamma heard?—your screaming, because you were frightened?"

"Do not ask me, Ida, oh! please do not. I am so sorry that I told you. It slipped out: I never meant to say that."

"Never mind, Ethel: I am glad I know, for I shall make Robert's doings known to Papa."

"Oh! Ida, please do not," pleaded Ethel, her earnestness almost alarming her cousin.

"I should have thought that you would have been glad, Ethel, to escape being punished, and a scolding from Papa."

Oh no, Ida, I would rather be scolded and punished for a whole year, than have broken my promise: you cannot tell how miserable I am."

Ida could not understand it, but still she promised at last to do as Ethel begged

her, and try to forget what she had heard. At all events, she said that she would say nothing about it. Although Ida put many questions to her cousin, she could extract from her no further information. Then again they spoke of Holy things, and Ida once more asked about Him Who came down to save us.

"And might I love Him too?" she inquired in surprise.

"Oh! yes, every one may. GOD commands us all to do so, and to pray to Him, and He hears our prayers."

"Does He," asked Ida. "I never pray. Has GOD ever heard your prayers?"

Ethel paused to consider. Then a smile illuminated her countenance.

"Yes," she said, "often, and even to-day, for I prayed to GOD to make you love me, and He has done so."

Ida was surprised, but at the same time convinced. "I shall pray too, Ethel: what words do you say?"

Ethel lent her cousin a little book,—

one that had been a present from her own Mamma, and told her that she could say her prayers from that. Ida looked at it, and promised to use it; then, thinking that she had been away from the dining-room quite long enough:—kissing Ethel, she thanked her for all that she had taught her, and left the room, humbled, but feeling happier—although she did not understand why—than she ever remembered to have felt before. Ethel was happier too. She knew now that she was beloved again, as she had not been since her dear mother died; and although she did not realize it then, there was another reason why she felt so strange and solemn a feeling of peace and happiness steal across her. In the midst of her sorrow, she was doing the work that her LORD had left her to do.

She was adding another star to her crown. When she was sad, and everything seemed against her, GOD was turning her sorrow into joy:—she suffered patiently:—she returned good for evil; and her

example was not lost upon all around her. She was witnessing for her LORD in the midst of a wicked world; and already two children of GOD were, through the blessing upon her efforts, beginning to know themselves for such. Her guardian-angel smiled upon her; the guardian-angels of two other stray lambs from CHRIST'S fold, smiled upon her, also; and no wonder that their smiles were reflected upon her soul, and that she herself felt at peace.—Ethel, how favored, how very favored, are those, who, though they may suffer much, very much here, and may even die whilst they are young,—yet live for ever in that world where tears are unknown, and where they will shine, in reward of their having turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

Chapter V.

ETHEL AND HER UNCLE.

DURING all this time, Harold had not seen his sister; Mrs. Ellis had kept him jealously with her. At first she had tried by coaxing, then by threatening, to make him tell her what he knew of last night's noise; but Harold was firm in his denial,—he knew nothing. All that morning, Harold had tried to see Ethel, but each time that he rose from his seat to leave the room, his Aunt beckoned him back: and, at length, gave him so many things to amuse him, that

he really forgot all about his sister. The dinner-hour came, and then he went up stairs to wash his hands. Robert went up with him, and prevented him from going into Ethel's room, as he had intended to do. Harold felt very angry with Robert for allowing his sister to suffer so unjustly.

"What's the row with you, Harold?" Robert asked, when they were both in his room, and Harold would take no notice of his cousin.

The little fellow turned away.

"Well, that's cool," said Robert—"not going to give a fellow an answer?"

"You're a coward," said Harold, "to let Ethel be punished, when it's all your fault."

"It's not all my fault; it's her own. She should not have made that noise coming in to you, when we were only having a lark. You know you were not really frightened, and that she made you so herself, by making such a fuss."

Harold knew no such thing: and

remembered still with gratitude his sister's goodness to him; but he made no answer, and Robert, thinking that he was gaining an advantage over his already too apt pupil, continued: "Girls are always stupid. Why could not she get out of it as we did? No one has punished us?"

"Because Ethel is good, and would not tell a story, as we did," said the little fellow, still upholding his sister.

"Wouldn't she though? I suppose you forget all about the gipsies? Ethel can tell stories as well as any one, when she chooses. You are foolish to believe all she tells you."

But Harold was not so easily persuaded to-day.

"I don't believe Ethel ever tells stories. If she did, she would have got out of being punished now."

"Oh! yes, she would," answered Robert; "she had not a chance to-day, because Mamma heard her voice:—it was all her own fault, for making such a noise;

but girls always do:—they always scream, and let everybody know what they are doing."

"It was very kind of Ethel to come last night," persisted the little boy.

"I thought you owned this morning that you were sure it was not a ghost, and that you were very silly to have thought so."

"So I did," said Harold, "and I meant it, but I was frightened last night, and I was glad that Ethel came to me."

"You are a greater baby than I thought you. You know very well that if Ethel had not come, I should have told you that it was not a real ghost; and then when I had shown you how it was all done, you'd have enjoyed the lark, and there'd have been an end to it. But you always were, and I believe you always will be, a muff, for you can't do without your sister: but it's all her fault; you are brave enough when she's out of the way; she's always namby-pambying so. If I had a sister continually trying to make a baby of me,

I know she should not manage that; especially after going to school, and being let into the boys' secrets. I dare say, last night, you let out lots of things you ought not to have."

Harold blushed. He had told Ethel that he heard many things at school that she would not care to know; and he had also told her that he never said his prayers; but he was very thankful that he had said no more, for he was beginning now to think with Robert, that it was absurd to care so much for a sister.

"I did not tell her a single thing, Robert," answered Harold, with indignation, thinking, by this assertion, at all events, to convince his cousin that he was no baby.

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," said Robert, "asd I hope you'll learn to be wiser now."

"I will," answered Harold, at the same time almost inwardly convinced that Robert was right, and that, although Ethel was very kind and good, and he loved her very much, it was very silly of him to

show it. And when he came to look at things in the light in which Robert put them, he believed, also, that if Ethel had not interfered, all would have come right; and then the little boy, who was learning ingratitude, as well as deceit, forgot his terror of the previous night, and his feelings of security when Ethel came to his summons. He forgot this, and Robert had so far persuaded him, that he felt angry with Ethel for bringing all this trouble about; and he determined, as he wished to become brave, to have as little as possible to do with her. With these feelings kindled within him, Robert did not find it difficult to urge Harold to pass his sister's door, when he again lingered to enter at it.

So the morning slid by, and the afternoon passed also, and Harold had not seen his sister; and when, later in the afternoon, he went out with Robert to play at cricket, he entirely forgot her.

Evening crept on: and, Ethel watched

the light as it gradually faded away, and the sun sank to rest. She felt timid, and wondered if her Aunt would never send to release her. It was a cold evening, and whether from that cause, or because a nervousness had crept over her, she knew not, but she shivered. Her memory carried her back to those winter evenings, which she had spent at her own dear home, when she had sat on a low stool, at her mother's feet, and had rested her head on her knee, and had known the joy of being caressed; and then she wept.

"I wonder if Mamma does know what is happening here," she said to herself; "if so, I am sure she is sorry for me now, and perhaps she will pray for me to be let out of this room soon, and if she does, I am sure I shall be, for God would hear Mamma's prayers:" and again that day the little girl knelt down, and this time, she joined her petition, in spirit, with that which she believed to be her mother's

prayer also, and though she still trembled and hid her face, and shrank from, she knew not what, she felt less frightened afterwards. This night Ethel did not like the dark at all. Her meals had been brought to her in this room during the day, and, notwithstanding a strong disinclination, she had taken them, fearing if she did not, that she might appear to be obstinate, and so further displease her Aunt.

Now not a vestige of light remained. Ethel could bear it no longer.

"I cannot sit up here without a candle," she said to herself; "I should be warmer, and less frightened in bed," and with these thoughts, she soon made ready to follow her inclination.—Yes, she was better there. She could hide her face in the pillow, and no shadow flitting across the room could terrify her, and she thought that her Angel seemed nearer.

But where was Harold all this time? How was it that he did not come to see

her? Perhaps he was enjoying himself somewhere with Robert; but could he be doing so, whilst she was suffering punishment for them all? She did not know. She could not fancy her little brother so ungrateful and unloving: she only knew how intensely she loved him, and how miserable she would be if he were under punishment, and that she would herself endure far more even than she was now enduring, to shield him. So unselfish was Ethel's nature,—so loving was her heart.

Another half-hour passed, and then her door opened. She knew the step outside; it was her Aunt's; and, in her fear, Ethel hid her face beneath the clothes. Mrs. Ellis had a candle in her hand.

"I came to see if you had come to your senses, Ethel, and were ready to tell me what you did last night: if so, I should have pardoned you, and have allowed you to go down stairs again; but I see you have no feeling of sorrow left, or you

would never have gone to bed in so stubborn a manner."

"I was so cold, Aunt, I could not stay up any longer."

"I suppose you expect to have a fire lit in your bedroom for you:—a nice punishment that would have been!"

"I was frightened, too, Aunt. I did not like sitting all alone in the dark. I did not think that you would mind my going to bed."

"I am not surprised to hear that you are frightened. Such a wicked girl may well be so. That only convinces me how bad you are; but this is not to the point. Are you going to tell me what all that noise was about last night, for I am sure you know?"

"I cannot tell you, Aunt; I must not; indeed I would, if I might."

"Then you must have been doing something very wrong. Your punishment shall be great for this, Ethel. You do not leave your room to-morrow neither. You are the

most daring child I ever had to deal with."

Poor child! She was more sad than daring, more sinned against than sinning!

"I shall not trouble about you any more now. I believe you like me to stand here asking you questions, that you may be able to refuse to answer them. But I have no idea of being trifled with by one so impudent: so as you choose to be obstinate, you can be so alone; and if you leave your room to-morrow, you shall be locked in it for a week." With these words, Mrs. Ellis quitted the room, and Ethel again was left alone with her thoughts, in the dark. She certainly was frightened. She could not help being so that night; and her Aunt's words recurred to her again and again. Was she really very wicked, as her Aunt had said, because she was frightened? She remembered often to have heard her Mamma say that wicked people were afraid, so perhaps she really was. "Yes," she thought, "I am very naughty, or else I should not so easily

do all that Robert tells me; but stlll I am very sorry now, and I do so want to be good, therefore GOD will forgive me, and I need not fear," and Ethel tried to dwell on other subjects; and she repeated some hymns that her mother had taught her, and she thought of an Angel hovering near, and her fears were again allayed, and she became more tranquil. But, so often as she said verse after verse of her evening hymns, in fancy she saw her dear mother, standing as she had once stood at her bed-side to hear her repeat them, and then again Ethel sobbed, and her sobs were so loud, that they could be heard outside her door.

Mr. Ellis had been at home for some time, and he had been told of Ethel's conduct:—yes, of more than her conduct; for Mrs. Ellis had said that she had been rude, and that, with defiance, she had told her she had made the noise, but that she did not intend to say why she had done so. "You do not know the trouble and anxiety that girl causes me from morning till night, and

how all kindness is thrown away upon her," she added;—"there has been no peace in the house since she came into it, and it is my opinion that there will be none till she leaves it again."

Mr. Ellis sighed. With it all, he liked his niece; and he could not understand how any one, so much the picture of his good and gentle sister, could be anything but good herself. He came near Ethel's door whilst she was sobbing so violently, and he heard her sobs. He entered the room, and went up to her.

"Why are you crying, Ethel?" he said, and again his voice was kind, for Ethel noticed how it resembled one that had never been anything but kind.

"Because I was thinking of Mamma, Uncle:—Oh, if you only knew how I loved her, and how good she always was to me."

He could well sympathize with Ethel's feelings, and understand why she had so loved her mother. As a boy, he had loved dearly, and almost reverenced his

only sister himself; and as a man, he had still further admired her character, and often doubted if her equal lived. But how was it that her child could be as bad as he was perpetually hearing that she was? He saw so little of her himself, and when she was in trouble, and he asked her for an explanation of her conduct, he could never obtain one. "I can quite understand your loving your Mother, Ethel:" and as he gazed at the little one, who so vividly recalled her image to his mind, he added, sighing; "and did she not teach you to be good, Ethel? She was so very good herself."

"Yes, that she did," said the child, wiping her tears away; "and I try so hard to do as she would wish me to have done, and I pray to God to make me like her, but it is very hard sometimes; and I am not so wicked as Aunt thinks I am."

"But did you not make that noise last night?" he asked: and his countenance brightened, for, at that moment, he would

rather have heard one of his own children accused of having done the wrong, than be persuaded that Ethel was so naughty.

"Yes, Uncle, I did make the noise. It was my voice that Aunt heard."

"Then what were you saying? Nothing can be easier than to tell all, and then your Aunt would forgive you."

"I am not afraid of that. Oh! Uncle, if I only could, I should be so happy if I might tell you all."

"And why may you not, Ethel?" kindly asked her Uncle, and he added, as the truth partly dawned upon him; "Did any one make the noise with you?"

"No, I was the only one who spoke loudly," said Ethel, with truth; "indeed I was, but please do not ask me any more—I cannot—I must not tell."

His countenance fell again. Then her silence was not because she had to screen some one else, for she affirmed positively that she transgressed alone. But what was it—why could Ethel not answer a simple

question? Was it really that she would not? He could not tell.

"Then, Ethel, I cannot help you; I should have been glad to beg for your punishment to be lessened, but how can I when you still remain obstinate?"

"I am not obstinate. Indeed Uncle, I am not; but how can I tell you, when"—she would have said, "I promised not to do so," but she stopped short. Ethel was very conscientious. To allow her Uncle to know that she had made a promise to Robert, would have been, in her eyes, to break it.

Her Uncle gazed sorrowfully at her.

"You are an odd child, Ethel; but there is one thonght, that should always restrain you from committing sin. You are so strangely like your Mother, I could almost fancy, when I look at you, that I am speaking to her as she once was; and I need not tell you, that she was, I believe, one of the most saintly women that ever lived."

"I know it, Uncle. If I could only be like Mamma, a little bit."

"She was never deceitful, Ethel: she did not know what it was to be obstinate either, and if she could be here now, I am sure she would tell you to own your fault."

"I wonder what Mamma really would advise," said Ethel, as if thinking aloud. "I wonder what she would say I ought to do."

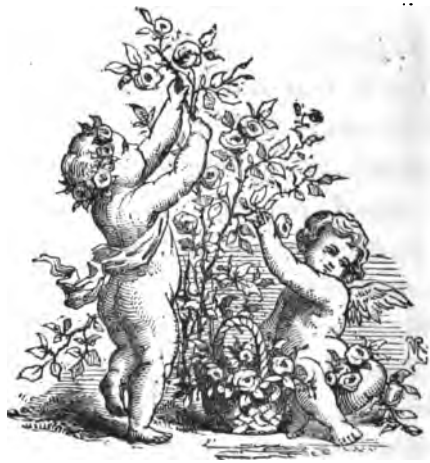
Mr. Ellis was more suprised than ever. He could not unravel Ethel's mind.

"Well, my child," he said, "I am going now. I fancied that you loved me, and that love, if fear did not, would make you confide in me,—will it not, Ethel? Have you nothing to tell me now?"

She raised herself up, and her Uncle lingered, in hope of hearing a confession; but he waited in vain.

"Will you kiss me, Uncle?" she said, "for indeed, I do love you, and am so sorry to disobey you,—and will you promise not to believe that I am obstinate, or that I like to displease Aunt?"

He yielded and kissed her: and as he folded her in his arms, he felt as if that anxious sad little face, was indeed a legacy bequeathed to him by her whom he had so fondly loved, and he longed to protect and shield his little charge.



Chapter VI.

A CHANGE IN HAROLD.

AS Harold went to bed that night, for a minute he ran into Ethel to wish her "good-night." He felt half-ashamed of himself for having neglected her all day, but he did not like to say so.

"I have been longing to see you, Harold," said his sister. "I have been listening for you all day."

"I've had such a lot of things to do," answered the little boy, as readily as if the untruth had been planned before-hand. "I was obliged to go out this afternoon, and

this evening I have been so very busy too."

"Well, you will try to come in to see me to-morrow, Harold, won't you? Aunt says that I am to be here all to-morrow."

"All to-morrow!"—exclaimed her brother, in surprise; "but why do you not get out of it as we do? I should say anything to quiet Aunt."

"You would not tell a story, or break your word, Harold, would you?"—asked Ethel, in surprise.

"I would not tell of Robert, because he would be in such a rage if I did; but if I could not help it, I would tell a story."

"Oh Harold, that is just what Robert always says, 'if we could not help it.' We can help telling falsehoods, if we like."

"Then why did you tell one about the gipsies, Ethel?" asked Harold, forgetting at the moment his own convictions to the contrary.

She did not answer his question.

"Oh Harold," she said, "you are getting

so like Robert. Whatever you do, never imitate him."

"I do not think Robert is such a bad fellow, after all, Ethel. It is only because you are so particular, that you think so."

"I do not think it is, Harold," and then she whispered in her brother's ear.—"Say your prayers in here to-night, or else Robert may tell you not to say them again."

At first Harold thought the plan a good one, but then his cousin's words recurred to him, and he feared to be like a baby.

"No, thank you, Ethel," he answered; "I would rather say them in my own room," at the same time resolving to do no such thing; "and I must be off now," he continued, for he feared that Robert would think him already a long time coming; and then he kissed Ethel, but his embrace that night was less affectionate than she ever remembered it to have been before.

She had suffered much for him that day, and now he made her but a poor return;

and when he left her room, she felt more miserable than ever, for his words and conduct had caused her far greater sorrow than all her former punishment had done. The following day was passed by Ethel much in the same way. Ida paid her flying visits several times, and so did Lilla; their love went far to comfort her, but it was a long sad day on the whole, and Ethel watched eagerly for its close. Her Aunt never came near her, so the following morning, not having received any further orders, she went down to breakfast as usual.

Mrs. Ellis took no notice of her, and Ethel felt that treatment sorely; but Ida, when alone with her cousin, was very kind to her. Her whole behaviour was so changed, her manner so different to what it had ever been before, that Ethel wondered. Even before her Mother, Ida was gentle, and Mrs. Ellis was surprised to see it. She did not then know that her daughter was opening her heart to

influences for good, from the girl under her displeasure, and had learnt a lesson of patience and love from one whom she had been encouraged to despise. But so it was. Day after day Ethel was more carefully watched by her cousin, and day after day, she grew in her esteem. Ida's character was remodelling, as she learnt the lesson of self-discipline: but she felt that she could never be like Ethel. She could never answer so mildly when people spoke sharply to her, and she could never learn to love Robert while he was so mean and disagreeable; but then she had not tried as long as Ethel had, and she did not ask and long for aid as earnestly. Ida was only a beginner in the Christian life: her thoughts were but newly turned to taking up and bearing her Cross, and she had had few advantages.—So days went by, and days merged into weeks, and weeks became months, and then nearly a year had passed, and still Ethel and Harold Lenie were inmates of their Uncle's home. They had

grown much in the past year, but Ethel looked pale, sad, and thoughtful beyond her years.—Often had she been punished during the past year, often had Robert led her into doing what was wrong; but still oftener had she resisted temptation, and had triumphed over sin. But Harold caused her much anxiety. She still loved him as fondly as ever, but he was much estranged from her. She was told nothing of his school life, nor of his many conversations with Robert; and he seemed to avoid, as much as possible, ever being left alone with his sister.

That Harold was completely in Robert's power, and that he learnt nothing from him that was good, was very evident. His spirits were very buoyant. He was so interesting, handsome, and brave a little fellow, that at school he was a great favorite; but still, at times, when he was at home, and learning his lessons, and he thought that no eyes were upon him, his sister was watching him, and with

surprise, as the child whom all others took for so thoughtless and happy, would suddenly place his arms on the table, and resting his head in his hand, seem to be thinking; then sighing, he would look sad for minutes together.

No!—in spite of his spirits—Harold was not happy on the whole. There was something, Ethel would notice, if no one else did, that often weighed upon his mind.

Harold was getting on well at school. He had been moved into a higher form, and was now almost at the head of that. This was partly owing to Robert, for he was proud of his little cousin, and often helped him with his lessons when it was hardly fair to do so. But apart from this, Harold was a clever boy, and worked very steadily. He had few friends amongst the younger boys. He was too much with Robert, and in consequence with other boys of the fifth, and they made so much of him, that he cared but little to be with boys of his own form and age.

Robert's friends, however, were not the best that could have been chosen for a little boy of Harold's disposition; so easlly led, and by those, especially, who flattered and made much of him.

At first, Harold had been shocked by much that he heard, then, by degrees, he listened with pleasure, and at last joined in the conversation. When Robert and his friends were "up to a lark," as they styled it, and had much to conceal, inasmuch as they did much that was forbidden, little Lenie was generally in the secret; and when needed, he was ready for his part in the exploit. It was convenient to have a little fellow in league with them who was so very safe. He could often do much that they, themselves, were unable to perform, and he was a capital *cave.* It kept off suspicion, too, having little Lenie with them. But Harold's conscience was not dead yet, and it was after he had been made to have a share in something which he knew to be excessively wrong, or when

he had, at Robert's instructions, done harm, wronged another, or had heard something that had made his little ears burn with shame, that the child would sit and muse, and wish, from his heart, that he could be out of it all. The boys of the first and second forms, envied Harold his privilege of being so much with the bigger boys, and, in consequence, did not think so much of him themselves; but there was one boy, in his own form, who really cared for Harold, and whom Harold really loved also, and this was Webster. He was just three months older than Harold, but so different in disposition, that he might have been three years. He was rather pale, with large blue eyes; looking too much like a girl to be called handsome, but he had a pleasant face, and withal he was so manly, that, although a few of the boys called him "baby;" by most he was liked, and well thought of. Harold admired him very much. He wondered how it was that he never did anything wrong, never was

seen where wrong words were spoken; and sometimes after school, when the younger ones were in the play-ground, and the fifth and sixth form boys not yet released from school, the two little fellows would saunter arm in arm together through the cloisters, and then Harold would ask Webster, how it was that he never got into rows. They would talk long together, and Webster would warn Harold against the fellows with whom he constantly went, and then again he longed to give them up, and have no friend but Webster. But how could he? What would Robert say if he did? So Harold went his way, and Webster his; and when Harold had got into his worst scrapes, he would avoid his little friend for fear he should be drawn into telling him all that weighed upon his mind. This, Harold often longed to do, but he dare not, for if Robert were ever to know it, he would punish him for being a sneak. So Harold often kept from Webster, when he would have liked to be with him; and

Webster, who liked Harold better than every other boy in the school, thought that he could not care for him. So the two little friends misunderstood one another, and Harold was the loser, when a coldness sprang up between them.

Chapter VII.

WORKING UP FOR THE EXAMINATION.

THERE was a great exitement now amongst the lower boys, as they were working up for the examinations. Until now, the second form boys had not had these examinations, but this year all was changed. The fact of having to work so hard, prevented Harold, in a measure, from being so much with Robert. He had made up his mind, if possible, to be first; and Robert, and all the fifth form fellows urged him to do his best. They appeared to take an unusual

interest in their little friend, and it was no wonder that he felt flattered when he was almost the only second form boy, whom the elder ones noticed, except to fag. Robert had chosen his little cousin for his fag; therefore, the latter felt more than ever in his power. But now he was helping Harold with his work.

"I don't believe I shall do it," the little fellow said constantly to Robert, when a fear came over him that he would not pass well. "I am sure that Webster and Roland will beat me, though I don't fear the others a bit."

"You must not let them lick you," was Robert's answer. "I'll see that they do not—you trust it to me, and then I will get to know what the questions are to be, and let you have the answers."

Harold looked very grave.

"That would not be fair, Robert. I could not do it. I would far rather be beaten by every fellow in the school than cheat like that."

"Spoken like Ethel," exclaimed Robert. "Well done, Harold: I like to see you pious."

"I'm not pious," said Harold, indignantly, blushing as he spoke; "but I don't like to do what's mean."

"You are a little fool, Harold, to talk like that. It surely can't be mean to do the best you can for yourself. Any fellow would close readily with such an offer as mine."

"Webster would not," said Harold, still defending the right. "I do not believe that anybody would make Webster do it."

"You surely do not compare yourself to him, though," answered Robert, now really angry. "He's the saint of the school, and I never knew that you put up for that; but I believe you're wrong, even there, and that Webster, himself, would close with my offer if he had the chance."

"I'm sure he would not," said Harold, once again with decision.

"All right, then," answered Robert, "I'm

to tell Turner, this afternoon, that you've become good all at once, and that you will cut all of us for Webster. We can't have anything to do with saints, you know,—They're such horrid sneaks."

"I'm not a saint," said Harold; "you know I'm not."

"Well then, will you let us pass you?" asked Robert again. "It's quite honest, and any fellow would do it if he could. If you don't, I shall call you 'saint,' all over the school."

"You may write out the answers if you like, Robert," at last said Harold, "but still I would much rather you did not,"

Harold hated the idea of cheating in order to win a prize, especially as the boy by whom he expected to be surpassed was his friend Webster; but then Harold was a coward to opinion, and dreaded more than anything to be called a "saint." Not because he felt himself unworthy of the appellation, but because he was no follower of his LORD, and was ashamed to be thought

such. To avoid ridicule, he consented at length to receive the answers to the examination questions from Robert, still inwardly resolving not to make use of them: he was taking the first step in sin—ashamed openly to do right. Again, on the next day, Robert sought him; this time accompanied by Turner.

"We have had a business to find these wretched questions," he said in a low voice, "and we've run awful risks to secure them: but it's all right now, and you're safe to get through capitally, for we found out the answers to all, and have written them out."

He handed them to Harold, who thanked him, and then put them into his pocket.

"Read the answers," said Turner, "and see if you can make them out."

"Presently," answered Harold. "I have not got time now."

"Oh yes, you have," said Robert,—"hand them here. I don't believe he means to look at them now, because he thinks it is wrong."

The elder boys both laughed.

"He's a regular 'Websterite,'" they said; "we shall have to throw him up after all."

"That you won't," said Harold; "and if you think that's my reason, look here."—And taking the paper out of his pocket, he read it through. Again Harold acted a coward's part, and again, to quiet his conscience, he made another resolution, he would not let what he now read influence him when he wrote his examinations, but he would only write what he had known before. This would not be so easy to carry out, and, if Harold had considered for one moment, he would have known what his decisions were worth.

What would Ethel say if she knew what he had done?—He did not wait to suppose. But then she was a girl, and, therefore, of course, easily shocked;—but Webster, he was a boy, and older than Harold, what would he say if he knew all? Harold could not bear to imagine, for he valued

Webster's opinion more than that of any boy in the school.

The examination drew very near, and still Harold, Webster, and Rowland fagged hard at their books.

"What a muff you are, Lenie," said Turner, one day, when he found Harold working very industriously: "if you just read the paper that Ellis gave you, through, a dozen times, it would save you all that sweating.

Harold blushed.

"I've lost the paper," he said, though the assertion was hardly true, for he had himself destroyed it immediately after he had left his cousin and Turner, the day on which they gave it to him.

"What a muff you are to be so careless. I only hope you have not lost it,—but for the matter of that, we've got another copy, so you need not suffer in consequence."

"I've done study for to-day," said Harold, jumping up and closing his books with a bang, and preparing to walk away. But

Turner held him back. He could not avoid the evil.

"Let's see if you are up, Lenie," he said. "You know a great deal depends on this examination. The prize is worth having, besides getting moved into another form. Only the first and second boys are to get the move. Come, I'll question you and see if you can answer them."

Harold did his best, and, to Turner's satisfaction, he could answer them nearly all. There were four, however, which he still knew nothing about, and in these Turner instructed him.

"Ellis will be glad when he hears that you know your lessons so perfectly," he said, as he refolded the paper. "You ought to have every question right."

Robert, hearing the last words, came up to them.

"What's that, Turner?" he asked, "have you been coaching him?"

"I have been hearing Lenie the paper, and he knows it by heart."

"Bravo!" said Robert. "We'll have a regular jollification if you do get the prize, old boy."

"I might not be first now," said Harold, "for I might forget the answers when the time comes," and he secretly determined instead of trying to be the first now, to be almost the last.

"Do you hear that, Turner?" asked Robert, "I told you that he was a 'saint,' and I'll bet you anything that he thinks he has committed an awful sin by looking at that paper, and I should not wonder if he means to do badly on purpose."

Harold was very much vexed to think that his intention had been guessed, and he was instant in his denials.

"I am not such a fool as you fancy," he said to Robert.

"Well, if you are not first after all our trouble, I'm blowed if we'll help you again; and what is more, we shall all think that you did not do your best because you were too good to be helped."

Again Harold's determination grew weak. "I'll do my best, Robert, 'pon my word I will," said the little fellow, now quite afraid that he might really be called good.

If Harold had been asked why it was a disgrace to be thought good, he would not have known what to answer; but certainly, nothing, he felt, was so disparaging to him as to be called so by Robert. He was very unhappy now. At heart, Harold was a good boy, but this terrible snare of weakness to ridicule, and want of moral courage, attending an otherwise courageous and brave disposition, did sad havoc to his character.

As soon as Ellis and Turner left him, he ran into the cloisters. School was over, and the boys were preparing to go home, but Harold felt too sad to join them. He walked quietly alone, and as he went, a tear trickled down his face. Harold never cried now, but, at this moment, he felt as if he could not help doing so, and as no one was by, it did not matter.

He was still sauntering on, when he felt a small hand placed in his arm, and looking round, he saw his friend Webster.—He hastily brushed his tears away, and attempted to smile.

Harold was forward for his age, and, although now only eight years old, he seemed to be older.

"Have you quite cut me, Lenie?" asked Webster, as he joined him. "We used to have such jolly talks together, and now I can never get hold of you. You are such an awful fellow for friends. Sometimes I am very selfish, and wish that nobody liked you but me."

"I wish they didn't," said Harold, feelingly. "You are the best of the lot, Webster, and I would rather have you for a friend than any of those other fellows."

"You seem awfully dull to day, Lenie," said Webster, after another silence. "What's the row? I believe Ellis and Turner have been bullying you?"

"No, they have not been bullying me," answered Harold, colouring; "they are not such bad fellows as you think."

"I do not like them," said Webster; "and I am glad that they do not care for me, for I should be afraid to be much with them. I hope they will never make you do things that they do themselves."

Harold could not answer. How he would have liked to have had no secret from Webster; to have even told him now all about that horrid paper, but then how could he, when Webster himself was trying for the prize?

"They say that you are a 'saint,' Webster," said Harold confidentially; "do you mind their calling you it?"

"I would rather they did not," said Webster, with truth; "because I am not one, but I think if I were, it would be an awful honor to be called a saint, because saints are all holy and good people."

"I should hate to be called a saint," said

Harold: "it seems as if they thought one so silly."

"Perhaps they do, Lenie, but then that does not matter. It's jollier for the fellows to like one; but then, if GOD does not like us too, their love can do us but little good, and GOD'S love is the only love worth caring for."

"I should like to be good like you, Arthur, if it was not for those big fellows. They won't let me be good, even when I want to be."

"You should not listen to them, Harold: they are an awful bad set, and they want to make you bad also."

"I wish they would never ask me to their rooms," continued Harold; "they make me do all sorts of things when I am there that I hate to do.—I know I am a fool to obey them; but then they threaten so."

Webster sighed. He was but a little boy himself, but his nature was very different from Harold's; and, although

physically much weaker, he had a large supply of the higher courage.

He aimed after being what he considered himself still so far removed from,—a saint:—and neither big nor little boy, could tempt Webster to commit wilful sin.

At first, when he had come to school, the fellows had jeered him, but this he had appeared to mind so little, and withal he was so pleasant a companion, and so spirited and good-natured in play-hours, that although few made a friend of Webster, yet, one and all respected him, and his presence had such an influence on those about him, that open actual evil, was seldom committed, even by the worst boys, when he was near.—And yet he was so young.

"I say, Arthur," said Harold, presently, "how is that you do not get into rows? What makes you so good?"

"I am not good, Lenie, but I'll tell you what helps me to do right.—I always say my prayers, and ask GOD for help."—

"Do you really say your prayers?" asked

Harold, in surprise:—"but there are lots of fellows in your dormitory, are there not? How can you?"

"Quite well," said Webster. "It's nothing to them whether I say my prayers or not."

"But do they not laugh, and say that it is like a girl.—Are there any other boys who pray also?"

"Yes, some," answered Webster; "but a great many do not. At first the boys used to laugh at me, and I did not like it; but then I went on, and now they very seldom laugh, and I should be more ashamed to give it up now, than I am to go on with it."

Again Harold wished that he resembled his friend; how he regretted now that he too had not been firm from the first.

"I never say my prayers, Webster," he said: "I used to say them once, but then Robert laughed me out of it, and I am afraid to begin again."

"My mother always tells me not to be ashamed of doing what is right. I wish you had a mother to teach you, Harold;

I do not believe that you would do wrong then."

"I wish, when I come as boarder next half, I could sleep in your dormitory. I would say my prayers then, but if I am put with Robert, I know he will never let me."

"He could not help it if you were determined," said Webster, always ready to say a word in season. "It's very hard to be laughed at for doing right, but it's much worse for the angels to laugh—at least they do not laugh, but to grieve, and be angry—because we do wrong."

Another tear glistened in Harold's eye, and this time he was not ashamed for Webster to see it.

"You don't know half the things I do, Arthur: you'd hardly speak to me if you did."

"I am sure I should," said the latter; "I am bad enough myself; but I wish you would tell me things, and let me help you. I believe I should be very bad, if I went with those fifth form fellows."

"I wish they did not like me," said Harold: "I would give anything if they would leave me alone."

Again Webster tried to show Harold how wrong it was to be so weak, again he suggested reasons for doing right, and resisting evil: but Harold had no courage in that kind, and although he resolved, if he could, to do right, yet he still made this reservation, and knew, in his heart, that something would be sure to prevent it. Webster's words would otherwise have had great weight with Harold; much more so than anything that Ethel might have said, for Webster was a boy, and Ethel a girl. But Webster's warnings, unfortunately, came too late. Harold was now so completely in the power of others, that he would find it difficult to extricate himself; and then there was another reason why Harold could not tell Webster all his mind just then,—there was that hateful paper, that was to help him through with the examination.

At last they parted. It was time for Harold to go home. As he gave his hand to Webster, the latter said:—"let us always be friends, Harold: I'll stick to you, I promise, whatever happens."

"All right," answered Harold. "I'd like it awfully;" and then, with a double weight upon his mind, Harold hurried on.

"I'll stick to you, I promise, whatever happens,"—this Webster had said. What if Harold won the prize, and Webster should ever know how. Would the promise be binding then?

Chapter VIII.

THE EXAMINATION PRIZE.

AT last the day fixed for the Examination came. There was more excitement about the second form boys passing creditably, than any of the others, as this was their first year of doing these examinations.

"I think Webster will be first, and Lenie second," said several of the boys on the morning of the day.

"I back Lenie to lick them all," said Turner: "he will do better than Webster."

But this was not the general opinion.

"I hope you'll get the prize, Harold," said Ethel, as she kissed her brother that morning when he went to school; "Robert says he thinks you're sure of it."

"I don't care whether I do or not," was his answer. "If anything, I think I would rather not get it," and Ethel again noticed that sad look in her little brother's face, which she had so often seen, without being able to account for.

"Do try your best, Harold," she said, as he hurried off.

He was very undecided whether to try to please Ethel or not. If she knew all,—she would not say, "do your best,"—pondered he, as he walked along to school. Had he dared, he himself would far rather have done his papers badly, than win the prize unfairly. But no choice seemed left to him.

Just before school that morning, Robert, and several of the fifth form fellows, sent for him.

"Now, mind you get this prize, Lenie," they said, "or we'll really throw you up.

You can easily get it if you like, and, if you don't, you know what we shall say, and think."

"And we'll let the boys know why," put in Robert; "and we'll tell Webster, too, that you had the paper to help you, but failed in spite of all."

Harold still felt undecided.

"You will be a muff if you don't get the move now,—and you've done nothing wrong either. Other fellows would have done the same."

He did not wait to hear any more, and ran up into the school-room. The Examinations were about to begin. Webster and Harold sat side by side. The former seemed to get along famously with his paper. He had almost done half, before Harold had written many lines. Harold felt no scruple in answering the first few questions well, for all these he would have known without the help of the paper, but later, when those other more difficult ones came, he did not know how to do. He hoped,

with all his heart, that Webster would get the prize, but then he did not like to do badly on purpose; and, although he had seen Webster hesitate for some time over the last few questions, he felt almost sure that he had succeeded in answering them correctly at last. So Harold wrote his examination to the best of his ability, fearing the displeasure of the fifth form fellows if he did not, but hoping all the same, that Webster would be before him; for, if he had done his best, and still failed, the fellows could not make fun of him. Many of the boys had not been able to do half their papers, many could not do more than half, but four or five worked on to the end; amongst them were Webster, Lenie, and Rowland.

"I am glad it's over," said Webster, as he rose languidly from his desk. "I am afraid that I have not done mine as well as I thought I should: they were such stiff questions at the last; but I did try hard,—I wanted to get the prize, because it would

have made my mother happy; but, do you know, Lenie, I had almost as soon have you get it as myself—you do deserve it, for you have worked so hard this time."

"I don't want it a bit," was the answer, "and if I get it, I shall hand it to you; I've no mother, you know, so it does not matter about me."

"I would not take it from you for anything," said Webster; "besides, if I did, it would not please my mother; it is not my getting a book, that she cares for, it is my deserving a prize, that she thinks much of."

"Well, I hope you will have it, Arthur. I would give almost anything, if I could know for certain, now, that you were first, and Rowland second; you don't know how happy it would make me;" and as Harold spoke, there was such an earnestness in his tone and manner, that it quite surprised his friend.

"You are generous," said the latter. "I want you to come out well; but I must say,

I would rather beat Rowland, than that he should beat me."

"I'm not a bit generous," said Harold; "don't call me so, I 'm an awful mean fellow."

"I can't see it," said Webster; "and I'm glad I can't," he added, smiling; "for I hate mean fellows, but you're not a bit like one." So arguing, they parted.

The next day decided who was the first. The excitement continued to be great amongst the boys, until it was put an end to by their places being called over. Lenie was first; Webster, second; and Rowland, third. The other papers were not nearly so well done. There was a breathless silence: the boys, one and all, seemed anxious to hear the result.

"Webster's paper is very well done indeed, and but for some questions at the end, which he answered quite incorrectly, he must have been first. His paper, on the whole, is written with the greatest care, but owing to his having answered these other questions incorrectly, he has lost some marks.—Row-

land has lost still more. Lenie's questions are one and all rightly answered, although the way in which he has written his answers, does not equal either Webster's or Rowland's, yet he has made most marks."

"I am much pleased with all three of your papers, boys," said the master; "you must have studied hard to have done so remarkably well; but you, Lenie, I must congratulate for having carried off the prize, and, for having done so remarkably well, considering the short time you have been at school."

Harold's face was crimson.

Webster looked very pale. He was very disappointed, as he had so counted on giving his mother pleasure; but still he knew that he had done his best. He was the first to approach Harold, after the master had left them. He put out his hand,—"I am so glad, Lenie," he said, "that you have come off so well, you deserve the prize, and I am glad you've got it."

Harold withdrew his hand. He could not bear to listen to this.

"You can't be glad, Webster," he said, "for you wanted to have it yourself."

"I know I did," was the answer, "but still I am glad all the same."

Robert now came up, accompanied by Turner.

"Bravo! old fellow," they said, "you've done capitally."

Praise was torture to Harold, now. There had been a time, when to be told that he had done well, would have made Harold very happy; but now, every word of praise stung him to the quick, and made him repent over and over again, for having committed so mean an action. Harold was not mean by nature, and he hated himself now for what he had done; and when he came to contrast his own conduct with that of Webster, and to consider whom he had wronged, he seemed more miserable than ever. And when he went home that day, and Ethel was so

pleased at his success, and his Aunt, even, kissed him, and his Uncle praised him, and called him a good boy, he felt as if he had never gone through such misery before. They noticed how little he seemed to care for all the praise that he received, and it astonished them. Still, when he blushed, and looked confused, they thought that he was modest, and Ethel, alone, of all who watched Harold, saw that something was wrong.

When they were alone, she questioned him.

"Why are you not happy, Harold, at having won the prize?" she asked; "did you not get it quite fairly?"

She put the question so simply, that it startled her little brother. Had Ethel guessed the truth? If so, perhaps Webster would too, and perhaps all the rest. Harold colored, but he did not answer Ethel's question truthfully. He would have liked to have told all, but he had not the needful courage, and he never told Ethel anything now.

"I am sorry that Webster did not have it," he said, in answer to her question; "he tried so hard, and his mother will be so disappointed."

"But still," said Ethel, "if he did not do his papers best, he could not have the prize."

"But it seems as if it were all my fault," continued Harold; "and Webster is such a good fellow, and says that he's glad I've got it."

"Is this the only reason why you look so unhappy?" still asked Ethel, anxiously.

"Yes, what else could it be, do you think?" he said quickly; and, not liking the look that Ethel's penetrating eyes had fixed upon him, he said he must be off to school, and left her.

Ethel was very sad all that day. She could not enter into the joy of the rest when Harold was praised, and they called her selfish, and an unnatural sister; and her Aunt said that if she had really loved her brother half as much as she pretended,

she would be happy now; and let drop the conjecture, far from the the truth, that Ethel was jealous of the praise bestowed upon her brother. But her love for Harold could not make Ethel happy now; in fact, it was this love that made her sad, and helped her, in part, to read her little brother's heart. She had very carefully watched his character, and she knew, better than any one of them, how happy praise had always made Harold. It was knowing her little to think that she was jealous of him. Jealousy had very little room in Ethel's heart now; least of all towards him for whom she would have sacrificed even her own life, had it been required. So she let them call her selfish, unfeeling, jealous, anything they liked; and bore her unknown grief patiently and alone, suffering as much sorrow as even her brother himself did.

All that day Harold tried to avoid Webster. He could not bear to see him. His kind words and gentle manner seemed

to reproach him so bitterly for all that he had done; for Harold was quite certain that Webster would have won the prize if he had striven fairly, since only a few marks had made the difference, and these had been obtained through writing those answers that the paper alone had taught him. Harold had yet an opportunity to own all, should he wish to do so, for the prize would not be given until the afternoon, when the school broke up. It was no wish to receive the prize, that kept back Harold's confession; nor was it altogether the mean opinion that he thought Webster, and many others would entertain of him, if they knew the truth; but it was the fear of Robert and his friends, fear lest they might ridicule him, and call him good, that held his better spirit in bonds.

What if he told Webster alone, and handed him over the prize afterwards? That surely would be better than keeping it himself, but, after thinking this over, Harold knew that it would never do, for

Webster was not the boy to acquiesce in deception, and Mrs. Ellis would wonder why Harold did not take it home, and then Robert would guess the truth.—No, nothing could be made of it, and Harold felt that nothing else was left him, but to accept the prize as though it had been his own.

The pain that this decision caused him, must more than suffice to atone for the wrong itself. So Harold foolishly argued, and, at all events, he said, Webster was far better off than he was himself. But this, had Harold listened for one moment to his own conscience, he would have known to be a false way of arguing altogether.

The afternoon came, and, in due time and form, the prizes were all distributed.

Harold looked very handsome, as he stood at the desk listening to his own praises, and though his dark eye sparkled nervously, and his whole face was flushed with excitement; it was attributed to excitement, only.

The boys all crowded round him and the other successful competitors, anxious to see their books. Again Webster stood at Harold's side; again he offered his congratulations, but this time Harold noticed a tear in his eye, and he knew that he was thinking of his mother, and of her joy if he could have taken so beautiful a book to her; and Harold, as he noticed how patiently Webster bore his disappointment, hated himself more and more.

"I wish you would have it, Webster," he said, handing him the book: "I do not care about it at all,—and I have not a mother, either:—you deserve it every bit as well as I do, and I only wish you had got it."

Again Harold spoke with such peculiar earnestness,—again Webster noticed how sad he seemed even in the midst of joy, —that he could not help wondering what was at work in his mind: and although no suspicion as to the truth flashed across him, yet he could not help thinking that something must be wrong with Harold.

"I would not have it for anything," answered Webster. "You are awfully liberal to offer it me again, and I am not at all jealous of you, for although I am disappointed at not being first, I like you just as much as I did before, and I do not think that anything would make me love you less. It's jolly that you are coming as boarder next half: I hope you will be in our dormitory, and have me for your chum. I'm so afraid of those big fellows setting you against me."

"There's no chance of that," said Harold; "and if anything makes me cut you, it will be because I think myself too bad for you. No one could ever put me against you. But I believe, Webster, that it will be you who will cut me, some day."

"Never," said the other; "and I am going to write to you in the holidays; so mind you send me back jolly letters, and tell me all about yourself and what you're doing. I am off home the first thing to-morrow morning, so I shall not see you again.—

There is Ellis waiting for you now," he added quickly, and as he spoke, he thrust his hand into that of his friend;—Harold shook it, but could not speak.

Yes! Webster was his true and only friend, and him he had wronged.—Robert was the greatest enemy he had ever had; and to please him, had he done it. Again the confession trembled on his lips; again he would have told Webster all; but the tempter was so strong within him,—Robert was standing so near; and once more his moral cowardice hindered him from obeying the dictates of his conscience. He wrung Webster's hand, and the friends parted.

Chapter IX.

CHRISTMAS.

"I REALLY thought, by the look of you both, just now," said Robert, as his cousin joined him, "that you were making a clear breast of everything, and offering to restore the prize."

"I wish I had never won it," said Harold.

"No, poor boy," answered the other; "It's such an ugly book, that I should be sorry to have it myself."

"That makes it all the worse," said Harold; "if it were not such a beautiful book, it would not be such a loss to Webster."

"What a little fool you are," ejaculated Robert.—"I'm blessed if I'm going to listen to all this humbug. What did you read the paper for, and then try to do the Examination well, if you intended to be so penitent afterwards?"

"Because you made me," answered the little boy.

"You little sneak! I offered to help you through: and now I've done it, instead of thanking me, you want to make out that I've made you do something mighty wrong. I'll tell the fellows, and you'll see if you get help from us again."

"Oh, don't tell them, Robert, please don't," pleaded Harold; "they'll think me so foolish if you do."

"They'll think you what you are, a regular muff, and serve you right. You have not looked a bit jolly ever since you were so praised. I thought you were going to cry, when the book was given to you, and if you had, and had let out anything about those papers, you would have had an awful

licking; so I warn you,—if you ever tell Webster, or any other fellow, anything about our helping you, we'll pay you out, and say you asked us to, and then get you into a jolly row;—not that there is much chance, I should think, of your telling Webster, or any of them, for they would think you an awful sneak; and Webster, whatever he may say now, would cut you dead."

Harold would have reminded Robert, that, not so long ago, he had said, that what he had persuaded him to do, Webster would not think wrong, but he dare not say any more, and promising faithfully never to breathe a word of it to any of the fellows, he made up his mind, as the thing was done, and he could not help it now, to dismiss the subject from his mind, and to make the best he could of a bad business. So Harold, instead of turning to gain his bitter lesson in wrong-doing, and intending a better future, was only hardening himself against a repentance which threatened disagreeable consequences, trying to shut out the past

from his remembrance. But this he did not find so easy. He passed wretched holidays. Ethel, he habitually avoided;—his little cousin, Lilla, had become uninteresting for him;—Ida seemed to have caught a fit of Ethel's goodness, and therefore, did not suit him; and as Harold now cared only for excitement, the sole companion whom he found congenial to his tastes, was Robert, and with him he passed nearly all his time.

Ethel seldom remonstrated with her brother now. She found that it was no use to do so, and, unless she saw that he did anything very wrong, or unless he, himself, sought her advice, which was very seldom the case, she said but little to him.

This estrangement from Harold was, of all Ethel's trials, and she had many, the hardest to bear. Day by day, her Aunt seemed, if possible, to dislike her still more, and to treat her less kindly. But this was nothing when compared to Harold's coldness, whom she loved so very dearly.

Ida's conduct was very different towards Ethel now, to what it once had been. She saw her worth, and often wondered to herself how Ethel could be so patient; and then she took comfort in beholding her, and tried to follow her example.

It was Christmas. The holy festive season had come again, with all the bright and holy lessons of love, humility, and obedience, which it carries in its train. Ethel, as a little girl, had learnt what Christmas means, and, as long as she could remember, she had gone to church on that happy day, to worship the Holy Child. This year, there was joy—if it could be so termed—in Mr. Ellis's household. Noisy games, much feasting and merry-making, spoke of jubilee and of festival: but, young as Ethel was, she had long ago been taught to associate the great Festival of Christmas with something different far from this.

"Are we not going to church to-day?" she asked her cousin, Ida, in surprise, as

the morning was wearing away, and she saw no preparations made for going out.

"No, Ethel," was the answer; "it is not Sunday, we only go to church on Sundays."

"Do you not go on Christmas-Day?" she asked. "We always used to go."

"Why?" asked Ida.

"Because it is a great and Holy Festival," said Ethel. "It is the day on which we keep Our LORD JESUS CHRIST's birthday: and so everybody ought to go to church to acknowledge His coming."

"I never knew what it was, that made Christmas-Day particular. I often wondered why people were so merry, and happy, at this time. Does He like us to be so merry?"

"Our LORD likes us to be happy on Holy Festivals," answered Ethel, "but He does not like us to forget Him; and He always wishes us to go to church, and worship Him, and think of Him, and love Him very much, on Christmas Day."

"I wish we might go," said Ida; "it does seem dreadful to remain at home all day,

and do nothing but enjoy ourselves on the day set for keeping Our LORD's birthday, when we should please Him by going to church."

"We will ask," said Ethel. Perhaps Aunt would let us go."

And they did ask, and though Mrs. Ellis was much surprised, and somewhat displeased, at the request, she, at length, gave the desired permission, and the two girls set off together.

It was a glad, heart-elevating service, and Ida had never thought so much of Christmas-Day before. The sermon was very simple, and the priest spoke so forcibly of the wonderful love and humility of GOD, becoming man, and suffering for us in the flesh, that the attention of all listeners was rivetted; and when he went on to draw his lesson from the Incarnation of their LORD, almost all present resolved to give their hearts and lives to Him; and to try, earnestly, for the time to come, to follow Him humbly, patiently, and penitently, whatever

their crosses or vexations might be. And Ida, also, made a vow. How could she be proud and unforgiving? How could she ever have been so, when GOD Almighty was born a little baby, in the stable, at Bethlehem, to atone for her sins? She was ashamed, and sorry, now, to think how often she must have grieved GOD by her past conduct, when, day after day, she had been hasty, and unforgiving, and had thought much of herself; now that she knew how very wicked, all the while, she had been. And Ida thought that her vow was sealed in heaven, and she must either keep or break it. With the help of GOD, she was resolved now to lead a new life, trying to conquer her besetting temptations, and to learn to love and forgive even her brother Robert, whose conduct she now condemned more than she dared even own to herself.

The remainder of the day was spent in pleasure and excitement of various kinds: but in the midst of all, Ida and Ethel, from time to time, thought on what they

had heard in the morning, and tried to fix it upon their memories. Harold's trouble seemed to be effaced already: at least, to see his eager, happy look that day, as he joined the festivities, you would think to trace no sorrow.

But excitement is but momentary, and when that was past, Harold would dwell again on the many evil deeds that he was now continually committing, and he would look sad again.

One day, about a week after Christmas-Day, Ethel and her brother took a walk together. They seldom did this now, but the others had all gone out, and they were left alone. Harold did not like remaining in-doors, and so he asked Ethel to take a stroll with him. As usual, she did what she was asked to do. A constraint had sprung up between them lately, and it seemed impossible to shake it off: Harold had so many secrets from Ethel, that there were few topics on which they could converse together. This made Ethel very sad.

"Who was that letter from, this morning, Harold?" she asked, after they had walked some little way in silence; "Was it from any of your school-fellows?"

"Yes," said Harold; "it was a long one, too."

"Was it from Webster?" again asked Ethel.

"Yes: Webster said he should write to me," was the answer; and Harold's conscious face was suffused with blushes.

"You never talk of Webster as you used to do, Harold," said his sister. "Don't you like him as much as you did?"

"Of course I do,—what a funny girl you are!—Why should I like him less?"

"I don't know, but I often wonder why you never seem to like to hear him talked of."

"I have no reason," was the answer. "But what is the good of talking about fellows? That does not show you like them."

"No, but you used to tell me so many

things about Webster, and now, when his name is mentioned, you never answer."

"It's no business of yours," said Harold. "I wish you would not interfere with me."

"I did not mean to interfere," said Ethel, "I only wished to know why you do not speak of Webster, as you used to do."

"I suppose I need not talk unless I like," said Harold, sharply; "I don't care to talk about my friends to you, and so I shan't."

"Do not speak so crossly," said Ethel, in her gentle way: "I did not mean to vex you, Harold; but you never seem to speak to me at all now. I think you dislike me, as the others do."

"I do not dislike you a bit, Ethel," said the boy, whose little heart yet beat warmly; "but still there are so many reasons why I cannot be so much with you now, and why I cannot tell you many things, that you must not ask me."

"May I ask you just one question?" still said Ethel; "and do not be angry, Harold; but is it anything to do with the prize

you won, that has made you so unhappy, lately?"

"I am not unhappy, Ethel," said her brother. "I do not know what should make you say I am."

"Because you often look so, and you did this morning, when Webster's letter came."

"What a spy you are, to watch me like that,—I'll never let you see a thing now," was Harold's answer.—"I am glad that I am going to be a boarder, next half, if it is only to get away from you."

"Oh! Harold, don't say that."

"I shall, for I mean it too. You are always getting into rows yourself, and I believe you try to get me into them too. You'd like to see me punished, if you could."

"I would rather be punished a dozen times for you, Harold," said his sister in reply,—"you know I would."

"I know you wouldn't.—You told Aunt, yesterday, that I had been fishing, when I begged you not,"

"She asked me," said Ethel. "I was obliged to tell the truth."

"You did not tell it about the gipsies, though, when you thought that you would get punished yourself," said Harold, and although what he recurred to had happened so many months ago, it was still a reproach often brought against Ethel. Her heart was full, and she burst into tears. It was for Harold, not for herself, that she had told the lie that was so often cast into her teeth, and now, even Harold accused her of it himself, and spoke so unkindly and unjustly to her.

"Well, you are a jolly companion," said Harold, "crying out of doors. I'm not going to walk with you to hear and see all this, so I shall go off and look for Robert," and away he started in search of his cousin, without giving Ethel time to speak, or to prevent his leaving her. He was always the same now. Ethel never dared to question him, or in any way to allude to his faults, for he invariably quarrelled with her if she did.

She tried to call him back now, but she could not speak; and as he ran away from her, he never once looked round, so that he did not see his sister when she sat down on a large stone, in the lane, in which he had left her, and sobbed aloud. Her heart was full to overflowing. Poor little girl! This whole day that was passing, she had been scolded and found fault with, undeservedly; even her Uncle's love seemed waxing cold, and now this was the climax of all. That Harold should be so heartless; that he, of all others, should have ceased to love her, and that he should upbraid her with untruthfulness, when, as she herself only knew, for no reason but to screen him, had the lie been spoken; and that now he should have run away from her, when she was so very sad, seemed very cruel.

All this now flashed across her mind, in the lonely lane to which they had wandered, and she wept, unheeded, in the open air, with nothing between her

sorrow and the deep blue sky, with no presence near but an Unseen One; and she felt as though her sorrow was pitied above, and a messenger of peace was sent forth to bid her still her tears, and to whisper in her ear, "that sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And Ethel thought she almost dreamt of God, and once again she fancied that she saw her mother, and the Angels were there, and she felt that she could speak to them, and that though love was denied to her here, her love was registered and returned in heaven. Still she sat on; her sobs had ceased, but her head was buried in her hands, and she never moved. She heard no one approaching, and when, at length, a hand was laid upon her head, she started, wondering who was at her side.

Chapter X.

ETHEL IN THE LANE.

SHE looked up, and her eyes encountered a kind face bending over her. She jumped to her feet, and, in her joy and excitement, she took the hand that had been placed upon her head, in both her hands, and covered it with kisses. Had God really sent her this kind friend in her grief? It must have been so, for she would rather have seen him, than any one else who could have come. She knew him directly, but, for a moment, he did not recognise Ethel.

"Oh! Mr. Dalmer," she cried; "whatever brought you here? I have been longing so often to see you."

"I came over, last week, to call upon a friend of mine, living in this neighbourhood, who was very ill; and to-day I determined to try and find you out, although I was not quite certain of your house. I thought, probably, this lane would bring me to the village: but I never expected to find you sitting here, and when I saw you, I did not know you, but wondered what little girl could have such sorrow, and what could be her distress."

Ethel wept again.

"I am so miserable," she said, "so dreadfully unhappy, that sometimes I want to die," and as she spoke, he read in her earnest face, that what she spoke, she felt.

"You want to die, my child? You must not say, or think that. God's Will is that you should live to do His Will, and you must be content in living to do it, whatever you may have to bear. We do well to long to

be with CHRIST, but it is impatient and faint-hearted, when we wish for death, to avoid trouble."

"Oh! yes, I know it is," said Ethel, "and I try often not to wish to die, and when I remember how naughty I am, I always hope I shan't."

"But what is your great trouble, dear child?" said Mr. Dalmer, as he took the rude seat from which Ethel had risen, and placed her on his knee. "Tell me what has happened to you since I saw you last."

She complied with his request, and related to him all that she could remember: and now she made no reserves,—was tempted to tell no falsehood, from her first act of disobedience, when she walked in the forbidden field; from her first fear for Harold's safety, she told all, and, as she did so, she accused herself whenever she had done wrong. The kind priest, who had comforted the mother in her dying hours, now listened to her child's sad story of sorrow, trouble, and

wrong-doing, since that good and loved mother had gone to her rest. He was deeply touched when he had heard all, and his heart was sad, when he pictured to himself what it must have been for this little girl, whom he knew to have been trained so differently, to have transgressed through fear, and then for the punishment to an unwilling disobedience to have fallen so heavily. He heard her confession to the end, —yes, it was a confession; and Ethel had jumped from his knee, and was kneeling beside the stone on which he sat, whilst she told him all, and, unprepared as she was to relate her life's history during a year past, she remembered all that she longed to tell, and Mr. Dalmer counselled her.

That she had done wrong, often, was very plain. She should never have feared man more than GOD: and if, in the first instance, she had checked the feeling of jealousy, and, in the second, had refused to please Robert, notwithstanding all his threats, when in so doing, she must displease

her proper guardians, she would not have erred. This, Mr. Dalmer told her.

"I was afraid that Robert would punish me," she said, "but still I knew that I was naughty."

"Yes, Ethel, and Robert did punish you, you see, even in the very way that you tried to avoid."

"Yes, he frightened Harold, but I felt as if I could not help doing wrong to save him."

"Do you remember that text, my child?—'He that loveth father or mother more 'than Me, is not worthy of Me.' You loved your brother more than you did your God, for you broke His Commandments to shield Harold."

"I will never do it again," said Ethel: "I do not think I should have done it then if I had had any one to advise me differently. I have been sorry ever since,—and I am so unhappy now, because no one loves me,—not even Harold, and I believe he is sometimes very naughty at school."

"That is very sad, my child, and I dare say grieves you much, but pray for him, and God will hear your prayers. You have learnt a lesson, though much sorrow has taught it you. Evil will never produce good. The very evil that you did, you see, brought more harm than anything else, for Harold does not even remember the untruth you told for him, with gratitude, but mocks you for it. Draw this instruction, my dear child, whatever your temptations may be, however difficult it may seem to do what is right, and whatever excuses may suggest themselves for sin; that you should never yield: knowing, that even in this world, sin cannot fall out happily to you; and that only the simple rule can carry you well through life, to live always to the glory of God, and to do His will."

"I have tried to be good lately," said Ethel, "but it has been so hard to go on alone, and I have often longed for some one to tell me what I ought to do. Now I will try again very hard, and I hope God will help me to serve Him."

"I am sure He will, Ethel, and He will pardon every fall, and raise you up again if you will only seek Him in earnest; and, if you really wish to fulfil His Will, be content to suffer, and your patience may at last win others to follow your example; and your little brother, and your cousins, may learn to serve Our Blessed LORD also."

Ethel's face looked brighter. Hope, comfort, joy, peace, all seemed once more within her reach, and as she still knelt on, with her face bowed down, Mr. Dalmer rose, and once more placing his hand on that little head, which burnt with pain, he absolved the little penitent, and blessed her newly-made resolves for the future: and still Ethel knelt, and Mr. Dalmer prayed fervently for strength for his little charge in the midst of her temptations and trials, and for strength for Harold also to forsake his sins, and to return into the paths of righteousness. Then he prayed for others also, for those amongst whom her lot was cast, for them who

knew not God, and for them for whom she had been doing herself wrong; and Ethel said, "Amen:" and then she rose, and when hand in hand with Mr. Dalmer, she left the stone, which from henceforth would be hallowed in her memory; she felt so happy, that she was quite sure she could never feel so utterly miserable again. They passed no one on the road, for few frequented this lonely path. A quieter, or sweeter spot for Ethel to have met the friend, whom of all others in the world, she loved and trusted most, she could not have found.

Ethel reached home rather late that afternoon. Mr. Dalmer, after walking with her part of the way, turned back, as he found that it was getting late. The tears again stood in Ethel's eyes as she wished him "good-bye."

"I am so glad that I have seen you," she said. "I wish I had never to leave you, and to go back home."

"Poor child!" said Mr. Dalmer, kindly.

"I wish your lot were a happier one; but you must be contented, Ethel, and bear anything, sooner than offend GOD."

"I am going to try," she said, "but it is so very hard, sometimes, when I seem to be all alone."

"Then carry your trouble straight to GOD, Ethel, and pray to Him for guidance, and be sure, that, in answer to your prayers, the HOLY SPIRIT will lead you to do right."

Mr. Dalmer had not time to go and see Harold that day, as he had been detained so long with Ethel. He told her that he was leaving the neighbourhood in a couple of days, "and," he added, "I should not like to go without seeing Harold, so you must ask your Uncle to let you both come and drink tea with me, to-morrow evening, and then I shall be able to talk to you both." Ethel was delighted, and after promising to beg permission for them to avail themselves of this kind invitation, she hurried home.

Mr. Ellis was with his family when

Ethel joined the party. She was glad to see him there, for she feared her Aunt would scold her for being out so late. As she came into the room, Mrs. Ellis glanced towards the clock.

"I am sorry to be so late," she said, apologizing to her Aunt, "but I met Mr. Dalmer, and then I remained a long while talking to him."

"Mr. Dalmer?" she asked in surprise. "Why, I thought he lived miles away."

"So he does, Aunt, but he came to see a friend who is ill, in the neighbourhood; and I met him in the lane."

Her Aunt would have said more, and probably would have questioned Ethel, unsparingly, had her Uncle's presence not been a check upon his wife,

"I wish you had brought him in, Ethel," he said, "I should like very much to make Mr. Dalmer's acquaintance. I have so often heard about him from your poor mother."

"He was in a hurry to-day, Uncle,

because he had an appointment, but he told me to ask you if Harold and I might go to tea with him to-morrow, as he wants to see Harold, and he must return to his parish the day after."

Mrs. Ellis would have declined the invitation for them, had her consent been asked, but Ethel was fortunate, this time, to have her Uncle to address.

"I am sure your Aunt can have no objectiou to your going," he said, "and I should like you to do so very much; and," he continued, turning towards his wife, "I shall walk over in the evening to fetch them myself, and then I shall have an opportunity of making Dalmer's acquaintance. I have long wished to do so, for many reasons."

Mrs. Ellis smiled a hard cold smile, and told Ethel to go at once to take off her things. With her face still radiant with excitement, she obeyed, and soon came down again. Harold had said nothing of having left Ethel so abruptly; and, for

a wonder, she was asked no questions as to why she had been out alone, and how far she had wandered. So the subject was not referred to. Harold was still angry with Ethel, and as soon as he had an opportunity, he told her that he did not wish to go with her to-morrow night. If his Uncle had known nothing of the invitation, his Aunt would have listened when he asked to be allowed to remain at home, but now she dared not, and Harold knew quite well from his Uncle's manner, that he would be forced to accompany his sister, —and so he was. Mr. Dalmer was very much pleased to welcome the children when they arrived. He was glad to see them again, and, as Ethel sat on his knee, after tea, round the warm fire, her thoughts carried her back to the time, when years and years ago, she had sat on that very knee, as a little child, and had listened whilst her father and mother talked to Mr. Dalmer. Ethel now again felt quite happy—quite at peace.

Harold did not seem so happy, and when, later, Mr. Dalmer drew the little boy towards him, and asked him of his school, and of his friends, he blushed, looked down, and could not reply: and as Mr. Dalmer still so kindly questioned him, and tried to elicit answers to those questions, Harold stammered something, but did not acknowledge the truth, and so Harold could not be counselled as Ethel had been, for his difficulties were not made known. That the boy had altered much since his mother's death, was very evident, and, also, that he was neither open nor truthful now, as he once had been. Two or three times during the course of the evening, he had seemed to wish to say something, but then he had struggled with the thought, and had banished it, for he feared, that if he did confess, he could not make a restriction, and so he would tell no one his secret.

Still Mr. Dalmer talked to him. Still he warned him against bad associates, and begged him whenever, at school, he might

be tempted to do wrong, to pray for strength, to resist the temptation; and Harold, as he listened to Mr. Dalmer, wished that he could be good, but unlike Ethel, he did not, at the same time, resolve to be so in spite of difficulties, but he only intended to be good, if the doing so were made easy. Then Mr. Dalmer spoke to the children of their mother, and when he told Harold how she had always prayed and hoped that he might be a good boy, the child shed such bitter tears, that his friend knew there was something wrong, but Harold was determined, and would own to nothing. As the evening closed in, Mr. Ellis came to fetch them home, and he spoke with such affectionate kindness to the two little Orphans, and shewed such warm pleasure in making the acquaintance of their friend, that Mr. Dalmer quite understood why Ethel said that she loved her Uncle very dearly, and was so unhappy when he was angry with her.

Chapter XI.

WEBSTER'S BIRTHDAY.

THE holidays were over, and Harold had returned to school, this half as boarder. He had once hoped to be in Webster's dormitory, but now he felt that he would rather be any where else. He still liked Webster, but yet he feared him, and always lived in apprehension, lest the wrong he had done him, might one day come to light. So when Harold was told that he was to be in a dormitory with his cousin, and some of his friends, he was rather pleased than otherwise, especially as

one or two boys of his form were there, also.

It was a fortnight after they had returned to school, and Webster's birthday. He had received a parcel from home, and meant to share its contents with some of his school-fellows in his own dormitory: this was allowed, and he had asked Harold to join them. It was a good-sized parcel: there was plenty of wine, some meat patties, preserves and dainties of every kind, and Webster and his friends did full justice to the meal. They enjoyed themselves thoroughly. What Webster valued most of all, though, was a letter he had received from his mother, in which she had enclosed him half-a-sovereign. This letter he showed to Harold, but to no one else. It was so kindly written, Webster thought that Harold would understand, and love his mother, if he read that letter—and so he did. He was not surprised that Webster set so much value on it, and he watched him as he placed the letter, with the half-sovereign still wrapt in it, as

his mother had sent it, under his pillow. Harold did not laugh, as many a boy would have done. The more Webster seemed to love his mother, and not be ashamed to own it, the more did Harold admire his friend. At length they parted, and as Harold shook hands with Webster that night, a pang of envy shot through his heart. If he could only have had a conscience as free from guilt as Webster's seemed to be. He entered his own dormitory, fully determined to go to bed that night at least quite quietly, without telling the others anything of Webster. But he was not permitted to carry out his resolutions. A group of boys surrounded him, and asked him all that he had done. They were not contented with knowing this, but also he must tell them what Webster had had sent him, and if there were anything left. To this last question, Harold could answer in the negative.

"Didn't they send him any tin?" asked Robert: "how mean!"

"Webster's mother sent him half-a-sovereign," said Harold, quickly, not liking to hear his friend's relations called mean.

"Half-a-sovereign! By Jove!" said Robert. "You should stick up to him, you're his friend, you know. Didn't he lend you half?"

"Of course not," was the answer, "I didn't want it."

"The fellows will soon worm some of it out of Webster," said Turner. "I should not wonder if it's half gone now."

"I know it's not," said Harold, innocently, "for I'm the only fellow who knows he's got it."

"The others will see it before morning," was the answer. "Webster's such a muff."

"I'm sure they won't," still argued Harold, determined, however unadvisedly, to vindicate his friend, and, in his eagerness, not thinking what he said,—"for it's in his mother's letter, just as it came, and that he put under his pillow."

"Under his pillow, did he? Who does

he think is going to steal it, that he takes so much trouble to hide it?"

"No one," answered Harold, "but he values his letter because it is from his mother, and that is why he is careful with it."

The boys all laughed. "Webster is mammy-sick," they cried unanimously, and Harold regretted then that he had said so much.

"We'll have a lark," said Turner; "we'll go and steal his letter."

"You shan't," said Harold, and his face was white with passion.

"We shall," answered the others; "we'll have his letter to-night, and you shall fetch it, Lenie."

"Not I," cried Harold. "I wouldn't steal for anybody."

"Of course not steal," they answered. "We do not want to keep his money. It s only for a lark, to put Webster in a stew. We shall give it back to him the first thing to-morrow mornin g."

"And read another fellow's letter," said Harold, with contempt.

"Not read his letter," they said,—"who cares to? We only want to take it just for a joke, to see how Webster looks."

"I would not," said Harold, in an excited manner. "It's a mean thing to do."

"You shut up about meanness, Lenie," said several of the boys at once, "or we'll tell Webster how you did him out of that prize. He'll call that mean, if you like."

Harold was really angry now.

"If any one's mean, it's you, Turner, and you, Robert," said the little fellow, addressing his elders, as he at any other time, or any other second form boy here would not have dared to have done. But to-night, it did not make them angry; they did not intend to quarrel with Harold.

"You make Lenie do it, Ellis," said Turner, addressing Robert.

"I'll make him, fast enough, if I choose," was the answer; "but I've thought of another way to have a lark, and if Harold

will help in that, we'll let him off with Webster's letter."

Harold was delighted. Again to wrong his friend, seemed, in his eyes, worse than any other sin that he could be guilty of, and in such a manner too, when Webster had made Harold his confidant, and had even shown him this very letter.

"If I had only not said a word about it," he kept repeating to himself.

"Will you strike the bargain?" asked Robert.

"I'll do anything, sooner than take Webster's letter," said Harold, without a moment's deliberation.

"All right, then," continued Robert. "What do you say, Turner, to our having a feast to night, as the others have had one? You know that fellow, Clarke,—he keeps his shop open to almost any hour; and if one of us went round to him—I've got a little coin, and I dare say some of the rest have a little too, and we'll have a regular spree! Who's game?" asked Robert, looking round.

"I am—I am—I am," cried several voices at once.—"But how are we to get to Clarke's; the doors are locked now, and they'd be sure to hear us?"

"I've got a dodge," said Robert. "This window isn't high, and we'll tie sheets together, and let Harold down by them. He's light, and we could manage it capitally."

"So we could," said Turner; but Harold looked very frightened.

"I should not like it," he said. "I'd rather one of the others went. I should not find my way back."

"He's afraid," said Turner. "He does not like to be out in the dark."

This was partly true. Harold was afraid to go on this clandestine expedition at night, and he knew that it was against all orders, and, that if he were seen by one of the masters, he would be severely punished; besides this, Mr. Dalmer's words still rang in his ear, and his conscience told him not to do it. But then there was his promise,

and what if they made him steal Webster's letter instead?

He did not remember that they could not really make him do anything against his will, if he chose to be firm, and if ever they had told Webster about the prize, that would have been better than for him to continue in wrong-doing. But Harold's weakness prevailed, and after much persuasion, and many threats, the little fellow suffered himself to be attached to the sheets, and with a small basket on his arm, let down into the yard below. From thence he had to scale a low wall, and then they directed him the way that he was to take.

"When you return," they said, "we shall be on the look-out for you, and then we shall first let down something to draw the basket and it's contents up, and when they are safe, we will drag you up."

Poor Harold was dreadfully timid, and held tight on to the sheet to which he was attached.

"You had better bring in a candle," called out Turner; "the one I brought in the other night is nearly burnt out, and it won't do to be in the dark."

"All right," said Harold, hardly able to speak for fear.

They let him down very carefully till at last his feet touched the ground. Then he untied the sheet, motioned to them to draw it up, and, in another moment, he was on the other side of the wall, on his way to Mr. Clarke's shop. Breathless he reached it, told his errand, and having paid for what he could, and, as Robert had before instructed him, having promised payment for the rest to-morrow, carried home his goods. His basket was too small, so the shopman lent him another. He had now forgotten the candle, and had again to return.

"Arn't you one of the young gentlemen from the College?" asked the man, when he re-entered the shop. "I've been thinking over it, and my missus says as she does

not think that I ought to have served you at this late hour, as she knows, she says, from having once or twice done a little washing there, that the College closes at nine. Besides which, I have had strict commands never to give credit, so I don't see as how I can serve you now again. If you don't pay up to-morrow, as it is, I shall come round to the College for the money."

"Oh, please give me a candle, Mr. Clarke," pleaded Harold; "and don't say anything about it."

The shopman hesitated, but Harold looked so distressed, that at length he yielded to his request.

"I don't believe as I'm doing right," he said, as Harold, for the second time, hurried from him; "and if there's any fuss made about it, I knows what I knows, and I can't help it either."

"Nor can I," muttered Harold to himself.—"What shall I do?"

He ran home very stealthily, and met no one on the road, until he was nearing

the wall, when he saw the head-master, and another, walking arm in arm, quite close to him. He saw them in a moment, and hid behind a tree. They had seen him also, but so indistinctly, and in the dark, they had not made out who he was.

They walked towards the spot where Harold was hiding, and then stood still.

"I certainly saw a figure," said one of the gentlemen; "and it looked uncommonly like one of the boys: but it cannot be," he said, "for the doors are locked; besides which," he continued, "I do not believe there is one of them who would dare to leave the house at this hour."

"I don't think that I can be mistaken," said the other. "I saw a boy's figure plainly."

Fortunately for Harold, a large dog at this moment commenced barking, and at about fifty yards distance, it ran from amongst the bushes.

"That was what we saw," then said one of them again,—"but how strange,—I could have sworn it was a boy."

"Better as it is," said the other. "I am glad that we were mistaken; for a step of that sort, I should have to punish most severely. I could not overlook it. The rule prohibiting the boys from going out after hours, is so very strict a one; and now it is so very late."

They moved away, and Harold breathed more freely. But he could not stir for some time. He was rooted to the ground. His fear seemed almost to have paralysed him. At length, however, he heard the iron gate open and close, and then he knew that the masters had entered at the front of the house, and, comparatively speaking, he was safe; so he rose, benumbed with fright, and approached the wall. But holding his heavy basket, he could not scale it.—What was he to do? He must make a loud noise to make the fellows hear him from this distance, and even then, it would be a great chance if he could get the basket to them. At last he hit upon a plan. There were several large stones lying near. These he

secured, placed them carefully one on the top of another, until he could, with ease, stand on the top-most one, and place the basket on the wall. This he effected, but how would he fetch it down on the other side? Somehow or other, the stones must be got over also; but could this be done quietly? He jumped on the wall, and looked down on the other side: there was turf there, so that if he threw them over one by one, they would not, unless—and this he must obviate—they clashed, make much noise. So, one by one, he threw them over; then, clambering on the wall himself, he jumped down on the other side, and again making a ladder with his stones, he reached his basket. He was glad to be safe so far, and hurried on. The boys in his dormitory were anxiously awaiting him, with their heads out of the window. The sheets were hastily let down, the basket cleverly attached to it, and hoisted up. The next thing, was to lift Harold up in safety; and, when he again stood on his feet, in his

own dormitory, he felt as if he had never had such a strain on his little spirits before.

They asked him why he had been so long, and he told them of his having had to hide from the head-master, and they praised him for doing it so cleverly. Then they began their feasting, and Harold, though without any appetite, ate and drank with the rest.

"I want more," said Turner, when they had emptied the basket. "I've not had half enough; besides which, some one must go and pacify this old Clarke. It will never do if he 'peaches.'—So suppose we send again, and buy him over to our side."

"I won't go," said Harold. "I've had enough of it, already."

"Who will?" asked several at once.

"We're all cowards," they said, laughing.

"Lenie, you're the only brave one amongst us," said Turner; "you've set us an example, and now you have been so plucky, once, just be so again, and get this letter. They all said they could not,

without waking Webster, and I betted you could, so I want to win my bet. If you'll help me to do so, I'll go to Clarke's, and the money that I win, will pay him off, and then he will not tell tales of us; if not, he certainly will; and then Mr. Rowe, having spied some one, will make inquiries, and it will be all up with you: for old Clarke will describe his customer, and we shall not screen you one bit, for it will be all your fault, for not getting this letter, and helping me to win my money."

"I can't do it," said Harold. "You said I need not, if I went to Clarke's"

"But then we did not know that you'd let yourself be seen, and now it is very good of us," said Turner, "to want to help you out of it. I'm willing, you see, to pay Clarke everything myself, if you'll only make these fellows once stump up the tin to do it."

"We'll all fork out," they cried; and Harold, at that moment, was too miserable to remember that not one boy in the dormitory had a single penny left.

"I cannot do it," said Harold. "It's so awfully mean."

"It's not a bit," they answered. "It's only just for the sake of the bet. If you like, you shall take the letter back yourself, directly you have brought it in."

"And the letter need not leave my hands?" asked Harold, brightening up.

"No," was the answer; "so long as we see that you've really got it; that's all we want to do, and then you shall carry it back immediately."

"I can't bear to do it," again said Harold, though now with less decision, and again he was about to consent to act at variance with his conscience; not because the poor boy found pleasure in doing what he knew to be wrong; this he did not; but because he was afraid to refuse his companions anything.

"It'll be all right," they said; "and Webster's bed is next the door, and that's safe to be open."

Again Harold hesitated.

"Why should I always do these things?"

he asked. "Why don't you fellows do them yourselves?"

"The bet's on you," said Turner. "I should not win if any other fellow got it; and it's to screen you that I want to pay off this horrid Clarke. You heard what Rowe said. I believe you'd get the sack altogether, if you were found out."

Harold thought so too; and this fear made him yield to their persuasions at last.

Webster's dormitory was not far off, and, as they said, the door was open. Harold paused before going in. At that moment, he hardly knew how he felt; he seemed, in reality, to be acting the part of a thief.

"But then it's only for a bet," he said to himself; "and now they are not even going to frighten Webster about it, because it will be back again, under his pillow, before he knows anything about it." This the fellows had promised him, and although he knew that they never kept their word, he could not help believing them this time, when so many said the same thing.

And then he went quietly into the room. Webster's Bible was at his bed-side, and as Harold's glance fell upon it, tears came into his eyes; and again he envied Webster; wishing once more that his conscience were as clear as his. But still he went on in the work, fearing what might happen if he did not.

Harold was getting more and more into Robert and Turner's power. There was the prize—the night-walk to Clarke's—and now this theft,—as it really would be—that they could bring against him if they liked, and if they did not fear the consequences, that their part in all the proceedings, might entail upon themselves. Webster was sound asleep. The glimmer from the moon lit up the dormitory, and shed a ray of light upon his bed. There was a smile of peace upon his face, and, as one arm was carelessly thrown over the coverlid, and the other placed under his pillow, almost holding the letter which he valued so dearly, Harold thought that Webster must be dreaming of

his mother, and thinking of all that she had written to him.

He slid his hand under the pillow,—felt the letter, drew it out, and while Webster still slept unconsciously, Harold returned to his own room with it.

"I don't believe that's it," the others said, as Harold clutched it in his hand. "Let's look, old fellow,—we'll give it back."

"There," said Harold, and he held up the envelope.

"We can't see," they cried; "give it here one minute."

But Harold was firm; and, little fellow though he was, it took two of them, after he was down, to extract the letter from his hand. Then Robert turned aside, and whilst Harold was still struggling to get free, took out the half-sovereign, and gazing at the direction, read aloud, as if to satisfy the others—"Master Webster, Sandown College,—all right; Turner, you've won the bet." And handing to Harold, as he rose to his feet, the letter, he said,—

"You see we only wanted to be sure,—you can take it back again." Harold, eager not to delay one moment longer, clutched the envelope, and without another thought, put it quietly under Webster's pillow; and he felt very happy that the deed was done, and yet no evil had, as he thought, befallen Webster or his letter.

Chapter XII.

SUSPICIONS AROUSED.

TURNER then started, and after encountering many difficulties, as Harold had done before, he at last arrived at Clarke's, paid the debt, and with the remainder of the money, brought more things home. When he returned, Harold, tired out, had gone to bed. He was very unsuspicious, though so much in the midst of evil-doers: and he fully believed that whilst he was putting back Webster's letter, Turner's bet had been paid to him, and that it was

this money which now enabled him to clear off Clarke's debt. Harold spoke no more that evening, and while others in his dormitory were still merry-making, he was lying in his bed quietly thinking over what he had done.

Should Clarke tell the Master that a College-boy had been to his shop late at night, and should it ever come abroad, that they had really seen that boy, and that it was Harold, himself, returning from the shop, what would he do to him? He could not tell.—Harold lay awake all night, wondering, but came to no conclusion.

In the morning, when Webster awoke, he felt at once for his letter, again to read it over, but he instantly missed the half-sovereign that he had placed so carefully within it. He searched in his bed, perhaps he had dropt it, he thought, in taking the letter from the envelope; but no—he could see no trace of it, and in amazement, he tried to imagine what could possibly have

become of it. He jumped out of bed, and again looked everywhere.

"Are you making your bed, Webster?" asked one or two of the boys, who, waking up, were surprised to see Webster so busy with his bed-clothes.

"No," he said; "I've lost half-a-sovereign, and I can't make out where it's got to."

"Half-a-sovereign?" they said: "why, where in the world did you get that from?"

"My mother sent it me yesterday," said Webster, "in this letter;" and he again searched to see if it could yet be there.

"And what did you do with the letter?" they asked, now quite interested in the search themselves.

"I put it under my pillow," was the answer; "and I've only just taken it from under."

"Well, we know nothing about it," they said, with one voice; "you never even told us you had any tin."

A few of the boys seemed really anxious.

"It will look awfully bad, Webster," they said, "if you don't find it."

"Let's have a good hunt," said one of the bigger boys, who immediately helped Webster to seek his lost coin.

"Let's ask all the fellows round," he said, "if they know anything about it;" and he, himself, put the question in turn to each boy, separately. There was only one who hesitated when he was asked, and that was Benham, a little boy, whose bed was next to Webster's.

"Do you know anything about this money, Benham?" asked Hooper a second time, addressing him rather sharply.

Benham looked confused.

"I say Benham, what's the row?" asked one or two, at once.—"You surely haven't turned thief?"

"That I haven't," he answered, now losing all appearance of guilt. "I would not take ten times the money, if I wanted it ever so."

"Then why did you not say so at once?" asked Hooper: "we should not have suspected you then."

But Benham made no answer, and Webster tried to let the subject drop.

It was a great loss to Webster, this half-sovereign; but still he knew that the only way now to recover it, was to ask Benham privately about it; as from his manner, he felt certain that he knew more than he had said. So when the boys were all leaving the dormitory, he held Benham back.

"I say," he began, "tell me what you know of this money, will you?"

"I don't like to," said the little fellow; "you won't believe me if I do."

"Yes, I will," said Webster.—"Out with it."

"Well then," he said at last: "I saw a fellow come and take it."

"Nonsense," said Webster, "you must have dreamt it."

"I didn't:" said Benham. "I could not sleep last night;—and the door was open, and some one came in and went to your pillow;—took something from under it, and

then, after going away, came and put it back again."

"I can't believe that any fellow could do it," said Webster. "Did you see who it was?"

"I cannot tell;" said Benham; "do not ask me."

"You must tell me," was Webster's answer; "I want to know."

"Well then," said the little boy in a whisper, "it was Lenie."

"I don't—I won't believe it," said Webster. "Harold Lenie is one of the best fellows in the school, and I would trust him with anything."

"I swear it was Lenie," he said, "and that's why I would not tell—when they were all here—because I like him, and I did not know how to believe it either."

"There was no time for further conversation, for, the prayer-bell ringing, the boys both hurried down stairs. Webster was very sad now, far sadder, young boy though he was, at the suspicion that had been

suggested to him, than the loss of even far more money would have made him. Like Benham, he could not bring his heart to believe in Harold's guilt, although he could in no wise account for his money so suddenly disappearing. He knew that Harold was the only boy in the school who had been aware of his having had this money,—yet suspicion, for this reason, would never have fallen upon him,—nor could it really rest upon him now, although circumstances were so strangely against him. Webster felt certain that there was error somewhere,—much to be brought to light.

The boys all met at prayers. Harold was very pale and very quiet, and as Webster, as usual, went up to him, he looked confused. This confirmed Benham, but still Webster's heart told him that Harold, if in any way guilty, had not altered to please himself, and that if he had really taken this money, there must be some history attached to it.

Webster had intended, before Benham made known to him what he had seen, to speak generally of his loss, but now he wished, with all his heart, to let the matter drop. His wishes, however, were not consulted. The boys had already talked the affair over amongst themselves, and the fact that Webster had had a half-sovereign stolen from under his pillow, had already reached the ears of one of the masters. He now entered the room, and with a countenance somewhat stern, he said, addressing the assembled school:—

"I wish to put a question to you, boys—to all of you, and I wish to hear it answered by each of you, truthfully, and separately. Webster had a half-sovereign enclosed to him yesterday, in a letter; this, it appears, he placed, with the money in it, under his pillow, last night, and this morning, although the letter was there, the half-sovereign was missing. Does anyone of you know anything about it? Has any practical joke been played upon your

school-fellow?—for I can scarcely believe that another motive could prompt the taking it. If so, own it at once, and put an end to so unpleasant a business as investigating this matter must be. The dormitory has been searched, and the money is nowhere there."

Webster's eye met Harold's, and he noticed how very excited he appeared and how pale he became. There was silence throughout the room, as each boy in turn affirmed that he knew nothing of the matter.

When it came to Harold to be questioned,—for fear, he could hardly speak. All eyes, he felt, were fixed upon him, and this consciousness caused him to hesitate still further. He had not, himself, taken the half-sovereign,—but then, had not the others? Must they not have done so? He felt certain that they must, and he hated and loathed them for it; and what was more, he was quite sure, also, that the money was spent, and could

not, even if he owned all, be refunded by them to Webster. But it should be, later, he resolved even now—by himself—somehow;—if he never spent another penny on himself, he would return to Webster the money that he had helped, as it were, to steal from him. He could not imagine how those fellows could have played him so foul a trick whilst he was on the ground. He felt himself now to be more than a party to the theft,—he was one, he thought, of the chief movers in it, and still he could own nothing,—he felt dizzy, and it was with difficulty that he stood quietly, whilst he faltered out, mechanically, that he knew nothing at all about the money,—what Robert and Turner had already spoken out, without faltering. Harold truly betrayed himself, and there was hardly anyone present who did not observe the boy's confusion.

Harold was questioned a second time. This had happened as yet to no one.

"Are you sure that you know nothing of

the money, Lenie?" the Master asked again.

"Yes, sir," said Harold, feebly.

What more could be done? Each boy, singly, had denied any knowledge in the matter.

"I shall have this sifted more thoroughly," said the master, as he ended the inquiry; "not, however, that I really suspect any boy here guilty of so dishonourable an offence as stealing; but still, for satisfaction's sake, I must have your boxes, and your clothes, all searched."

"Very well, sir," said the boys, with one consent, and now, too, Harold looked at ease with the rest.

Webster could not make it out. That Harold had had some share in it all, was evident, but then why should he have taken Webster's money? It was so foreign to Harold's true nature to do anything unjust or mean, that, even now, with appearances all against him, he could hardly believe his own conviction. Webster begged that the

matter might be dropped, but that could not be listened to. The boxes were all searched, and still there was no trace of the money. Webster was very thankful that he had not been asked whether he had any suspicions himself as to the disappearance of the money; for, with all his love for Harold, he could not have told a lie as Benham had done. Webster made no difference in his conduct towards Harold,—with one exception. He was even more affectionate to him than usual, and took every opportunity of being alone with him, in order, if possible, to encourage him with his own lips to own what he had really done. But Harold shrank more and more from Webster's fellowship, and he would never remain with him one minute after he could get away; and as Harold had no intention, and was too cowardly, to own anything, and Webster, too feeling, even slightly to mention his suspicions, not a word on the subject passed between them, and each boy hid

his own secret grief deep within his breast; and Harold little guessed how dearly Webster loved him in spite of all; nor did Webster know, that, notwithstanding Harold's having entered his room, and taken that letter, he loved him better than any other fellow in the world, and would rather have suffered much, than have chosen to wilfully wrong him.—But so it was.—The friends were sundered and miserable, and nothing, but a confession on the part of Harold, could bring them together again.

Chapter XIII.

RUNNING AWAY.

"I SAY," said Hooper, joining a group of boys in the play-ground, a few days after Webster's loss had been known, "there's an awful row.—That fellow Clarke has just been here to fetch a basket, which he says has never been returned since one night, when one of our fellows went late, to buy some things from him, and he lent this basket. He's now in Mr. Rowe's study, who's asking him lots of questions. I've heard all about it.—Clarke's been describing the fellow he lent it to, and

then he says another of us went afterwards and bought some more things. Old Rowe's in an awful rage, and I don't know what he intends to do when he finds out who it was. I can't imagine who had the pluck to go out so late,—can you, Turner?" he asked, facing the boy whom he addressed: "and they say it was a little fellow, too."

At this moment Harold came up.

"Have you heard, Lenie?" asked Hooper again. "We're in for another examination before the last is settled. It seems that some of our fellows have been late at night to Clarke's, and that one of them borrowed a basket that was not returned, and so old Clarke has turned up after it, and has told the Head-Master the whole affair. I'm glad I did not go, ar'n't you?"

Again Harold could not speak; again he looked very pale.—Was every misdeed that he had ever committed about to be exposed at once? It seemed like it, and well perhaps for him if it were so, as he would not confess his wrong-doings himself.

Harold left the group, and turned away. He walked up and down the cloisters alone. He could not bear the other boys to speak to him. Webster caught sight of him, and came up to him.

"I say, Lenie," he began, taking hold of his friend's arm. "What's wrong with you? you look so miserable."

Harold shook him off.

"Nothing," he said, "I am all right."

"I am sure you're not," said Webster, kindly; "and I wish you'd tell me your trouble; then I would try to help you out of it."

"You could not," answered Harold. "It would be far worse if you did know it."

"Why don't you try me?" said Webster, "and see if I would not help you, if you made a friend of me."

"You'd hate me, Webster, if I did," said Harold, colouring. "You would not own me for a friend, if you knew all."

"Trust me," said Webster, who in his generous heart, believed Harold to be in

some way guilty of more than he actually was. "I'll stick to you through anything."

Again Harold tried to move away. Nothing ever made him hate himself, and his faults, more than Webster's kindness to him.

Webster changed the subject.

"Do you know?" he said at length, "that Clarke has been here about one of our fellows going late one night to his shop, to buy some things, and each one of us has to show up before the Head-Master, at three o'clock this afternoon, and Clarke's to be there to point the fellow out. Isn't it an odd affair? I can't imagine who had the cheek to do it."

"And what do you think will happen to the fellow, if Clarke does pick him out?" asked Harold, now stopping still in his walk, and gazing earnestly at Webster.

"I don't know," he answered. "I should not wonder if he got the sack."

Another fellow advanced to speak to Webster, and Harold seized the opportunity to slip away.

. . . . . .

Dinner-time came, and still the boys talked anxiously together. All the fellows from dormitory number four felt frightened, but none looked pale, save Harold Lenie.

"You must swear it was not you," said Robert, to him, just before they went to dinner. "It's our only chance, for all to swear we know nothing about it. If Clarke fixes on you, say he must be mistaken, as you were fast asleep that night at such an hour; and you've a capital character for truthfulness, and you're a favourite with the Master, and sure to be believed, and we'll back you up,—won't we, Turner?"

"Yes," answered the other: "we'll all tell the lie and stick to it; but, unfortunately, we put that wretched basket into Harold's box."

"Can't we hide it?" asked Harold.

"There's no time for that," said Turner: "besides, it's big, and where could it go? There are lots of spies about.—I doubt if we could get into the dormitory at all before three o'clock. Why even the fellows themselves would peach to-day!"

Poor Harold! It was getting worse and worse. He was now to swear to a lie, that would of necessity be proved to be such, as soon as a search should be made, and the basket discovered in his box.

. . . . . .

Dinner was over. The summons to appear in the school-room, before the Head-Master, had gone forth, and Harold's courage failed him. Go with the rest he could not—but then, what was to be done? His fears hardly allowed him power to think. He had but one thought left, and that was to run away; but how could he? The boys were one and all, save one, in the school-room now. He, alone, had held back. —The street door was ajar: Clarke had just been re-admitted. Harold snatchad

up his cap, and, in a moment, without once asking himself whither he was going, he effected his escape, and shut the door behind him. He ran for some distance,—then suddenly stopped short. Whither should he go? Home, he dared not. Should he turn back now, and own all? No,—that was impossible;—the fellows would thrash him if he did; and if he were to be expelled, what would his Uncle say? But then, what were his chances now? Was he not, in fact, expelling himself? He did not know—he knew nothing—he could not think, and pressing his little hands to his burning, throbbing temples, he hurried on wherever his footsteps led him, only halting occasionally to recover his breath. It was still winter time, and very cold, but Harold was very hot and feverish. The snow was late this year, and the ice was still upon the ground. Harold noticed neither heat nor cold. At length he felt tired, and stopped to think.—What should he do?

Where could he go? They must have missed him by this time, and it was in vain that he almost tried to persuade himself that out of so many boys one would not be missed. He knew too well, how it was the custom, in such an emergency to call all the boy's names over, one by one, when each, separately, was required to answer for himself. There was only one thing that he was convinced of now,—that it was too late to turn back, for he had not the courage to do so.

At length his attention was, for a time, called off from his troubles, for he had neared a large pond, on which many persons were skating. He waited for some minutes, watching the skaters as they passed; and then it was for a moment, he forgot his fears.—As he stood on the edge of the pond, noticing how happy the skaters looked, rapid footsteps, that he heard approaching, recalled him to his own wretched condition, and, as he gazed hastily round, in the distance he saw his cousin

Robert running very quickly. He hoped that he did not see him, and, in a moment, he was on the ice, lost, as he imagined, from sight amidst the skaters. But Robert had already seen him.

Chapter XIV.

OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE.

PUNCTUALLY at three o'clock that same afternoon, the Head-Master had entered the school-room, attended by the shopman, Clarke. Till now, the boys had made game of Clarke, and they had been wont to call him "Old Sugar," partly because he dealt largely in that article, and partly, perhaps, because his nature savoured of sweetness. He, himself, was very partial, as he used to say, "to the young gentlemen of the College, and he was the very last one, in

all the world, to wish to get them into a row;" but still, their visits to his shop, at night, had worried him, and his Missus had sent him round for that basket, neither of them dreaming in the least what storm they were stirring. Now the boys regarded Clarke with a sort of fear, and he, in turn, felt thoroughly ashamed of himself, for having thus requited all the young gentlemen's favour towards him.

"Is the boy who borrowed the basket here?" asked the Head-Master, turning to Clarke, as soon as they were fairly in the large school-room, now almost filled with boys.

Clarke looked around, and searched in vain.

"No, Sir," he said, at length. "He ain't here."

The Master looked surprised, but gratified. He would have been truly glad, could the innocence of the boys, one and all, have been proved. Then he asked for the list, and called the names over. As

each boy heard his own, he stood out and made answer to it, until Lenie's was uttered, and then no answer was made. He was the only boy absent, and he was immediately sent for.

"Shall I go and find him, Sir?" asked Robert, anxious, now especially, to be out of the room, for he feared the questions that might follow.

"What a little fool Harold is," he muttered to himself. "It's sure to come out now."

"Yes, Ellis, go," answered the Head-Master. "I said that every boy was to be present here at three, and how came Lenie to disobey my orders?"

Mr. Rowe looked very grave.

Could the boy, now in question, be Harold Lenie? He did not think so, for he, with many others of the masters thought well of this boy, and believed him to be trustworthy. Still, his disappearance was very strange, and it seemed more so, when the house had been searched in vain, and Ellis had to go out of doors, to seek his cousin.

Robert tracked Harold to the ice. He was breathless with running and with rage, when he followed him to it.

"You little fool," he exclaimed, catching hold of his arm. "How dare you behave like this? Rowe's in an awful rage, and he's sure to suspect you now."

"Does he know I've gone?" asked Harold, anxiously.

"Of course, he does; and he says you're to come back at once, so be quick, and perhaps, still we may get you off."

But Harold was immovable.

"I shan't come," he said. "I'm never coming back to school again."

"Arn't you, though? Where do you think you're going to? The father will give it you well, when he knows that you've run away.—Don't be such an awful fool, Harold," he urged again. "There's but one thing left, and that's to come back at once, and to get out of it as well as you can."

But Harold would not stir.

At that moment, Robert, looking up, caught sight of Ethel, who was taking a walk with little Lilla. She had come some distance to-day, as Lilla had asked her to take her to see the skating.

"By Jove! there's Ethel," he exclaimed: "I shall go and tell her you've cut away from school,—and won't she blub?"

Robert had disappeared, before Harold could find time to beg him not to do as he said.

Ethel was surprised when he came up to her.

"Are you out of school so early, Robert?" she asked, in astonishment.

"Yes," was the answer. "I was sent to bring Harold back, for he's been up to mischief, and now, like a fool, he's run away from school. I found him on the ice, and he won't come back with me. There will be an awful row if he doesn't; will you try to persuade him, Ethel."

"I must not go on the ice," she said: "I promised Uncle that I would not, but I'll

beckon to Harold, and perhaps he might come to me then. What has he been doing? I am sorry to hear that he has run away from school." And Ethel did look so very sad, that Robert thought very much persuasion would not be necessary to get Ethel on the ice to fetch Harold off; and he, himself, was most anxious to take Harold back to school, as he thought that so much might still depend on it.

"Oh! do go, Ethel," Robert said again. "I believe Harold would come for you, and you don't know what an awful row there'll be if he isn't back soon. He was an idiot to cut away."

Ethel walked to the edge of the ice, and, with her hand, beckoned to Harold. He saw her, but turned away.

"That's not a bit of good," said Robert: "I've been persuading him myself, and he won't listen to a word I say. Papa never thought that anything like this would call you on the ice, or I'm sure he would release you from your promise."

For a moment Ethel hesitated; for a moment she weighed both sides of the question, and with Robert, at first, she thought that the call to disobey was very great, but her temptation was only momentary. Mr. Dalmer's words came back to her, and she knew that nothing could be an excuse for doing wrong and, perhaps, even if she disobeyed, and went on the ice, herself, to fetch Harold off, he might not come, and then again she would be disobeying to no purpose. But above all which, it would be wrong; and she had promised Mr. Dalmer to be firm, and, in so doing, had, as it were, promised God also, and she had prayed to Him to make her so.

"I must not disobey," she said; "and really, Robert, I will not do it, though I should be very glad, indeed, if Harold would come off the ice, and go back to school again,"

"You great idiot," said Robert, "to stick at things like that.—You're the only one

that can make Harold do anything, and you won't try your influence now;"—perhaps hardly recollecting as he spoke, how industriously he had laboured at destroying that influence.

"I am so sorry, Robert," she said, "that I cannot do as you wish: I would in a moment, if Uncle had not told me, as I came out, not to go on the ice."

"Sorry!" exclaimed Robert: "it looks like sorrow, you stubborn thing," and as he spoke, he gave Ethel a hasty push, as he would have given to a boy at school, had he thwarted him, at the moment forgetting that she was a weak girl, unable to stand against it. Ethel, in consequence of the push that she had received, ran two or three feet on the ice, and in that part it was not firm, and would not bear.

Robert did not, however, fear the consequences, for he knew that the water here was not deep. It gave way, as he expected, and Ethel stood in water some way above her ancle. He gave her his hand to help her out

"I did not mean to do that," he said. "I am sorry that you are so wet; but it was your own fault. If you had gone on the ice as I asked you, in the proper place, this would not have happened. This comes of being obedient."

Ethel said nothing, and stood in silence on the bank. Harold had seen his sister's accident under Robert's rough hand, and he now came towards her.

"Are you very wet, Ethel?" he asked, forgetting, for the moment, his own trouble. "I hope you won't take cold."

"Oh no," she answered, "I do not think that I shall,—but Harold, darling," she added, "won't you go back to school now? I will walk there with you, if you will."

Harold's love towards his sister, once so strong, seemed suddenly to revive, and he could not resist her pleading. He had been so very wretched—had suffered so very much, lately, that he yearned for her sympathy now with all his heart.

"I dare not go back to school, Ethel,"

he said at first; I've got into rows there, and they'll expel me if I do."

"Perhaps they won't," she said, "if you own all: and it is so much worse to run away, like this."

Harold would have told his sister all his trouble, and all the wrong he had consented to, and the wrong into which he had been betrayed, if Robert had not been by, but now he dared not. Still she heard enough, to satisfy her that Harold had only run away from school, because he feared that he would have been questioned on some malpractice of which he was really guilty.

"Do speak the truth, Harold," she said, earnestly, not heeding Robert, at her side. "Whatever you have done, own all, and God will forgive you. It is so cowardly, and so wicked, to tell lies."

"He daren't," said Robert. "If he told the truth, the fellows would thrash him.—Don't listen to her advice, Harold," he said, turning towards him.—"Trust yourself to me. and I'll get you off."

Harold did feel penitent now, and to say the truth, he was getting thoroughly tired of Robert, and of the trouble that he was continually bringing upon him; and looking at his sister, when they neared the gate, he said, as he kissed her tenderly,—"I think I shall follow your advice, Ethel. I wish I had always done so." And they parted.

Left to herself, and to thinking of herself, Ethel found out that she was very cold. Her feet and legs were chilly and wet, but till now, she had not thought of them. Harold had been her one anxiety, and the kiss he gave her, and the few kind words that he spoke, when he wished her "good-bye," fully requited all the love that had prompted her to walk back with him, when she was herself wet and cold. She had done so in the hope of persuading him to confess all, and she left him with a comforting trust that she had succeeded. She hurried home.

"How cold you seem, Ethel," said little

Lilla, looking anxiously at her cousin, whose teeth were chattering, and who was inwardly shivering.

"Yes, I am," said Ethel, beginning to run; "my feet are so wet, and that makes me feel cold."

"It was naughty of Robert to push you on the ice," said the little girl. "I shall tell Mamma."

"No, Lilla, don't do that. I would much rather she did not know anything about it. Robert did not really mean to push me in, and he was sorry afterwards."

"I should like to tell," said Lilla. "It was so very unkind of him."

"I shall be angry with you, Lilla, if you do say anything that has happened So promise me you will not, and I shall believe you."

And Lilla did promise to mention nothing that had happened, with either Robert or Harold, unless she were asked, "and then of course," added Ethel, "we must speak the truth."

They were both very tired when they reached home. Ethel ran at once to her room, to change her wet shoes and stockings. But she was too late with her precautions. They had been on her poor little feet too long already, and she had caught cold. She was aware that she had, but still she thought little of this. She was surprised, however, when she went down stairs, and sat close by the fire, to find that she shivered still, and that nothing would make her warm. She would have liked to tell her Aunt how ill she was already feeling, and would have asked leave to go to bed, but she feared her too much; besides dreading, in any way, to cause Robert's, or Harold's, trespasses to come to light. So she sat by the fire, and shivered on. And then her head began to ache, and her face to burn; and she could sit up no longer. Much as she tried to appear well, her Uncle could see that there was something the matter with her, and when he went towards her, and put

his arm round her, and asked if she were ill, her head fell back upon his shoulder, and she burst into tears. Yes, Ethel was ill, and knew it, and no one but herself could tell how ill.

Her Aunt looked up.—

"Don't make such a fuss, Ethel," she said. "I dare say you have walked a little too far to-day, and have a head-ache in consequence, but no doubt it will be better soon. I often suffer from head-ache myself."

Had Mrs. Ellis known the actual pain that her poor little niece was suffering when she spoke so unfeelingly, probably she would have been a little kinder in her tone and manner, and would not have added a sad heart-ache to what was already so hard to bear.

"May I go to bed, Aunt?" asked Ethel, softly; "I am so cold."

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it, go at once; but you are not at all cold," she added, feeling her; "why you are as hot as you can be."

Ethel rose to fetch her candle, but she sat down again. She felt sick, and giddy, and could not stand alone. Her Uncle had his eye upon her,—and rising from his seat, and taking her by the hand, he lit her candle, and led her to the door: when, becoming sensible how weak she was, and growing uneasy himself about her, he ended with carrying her up stairs, and into her room; there leaving her to the care of Ida, who had come up also.

With much difficulty Ida helped Ethel into bed: she did not speak at all, and moaned whenever she was touched. She ached in every limb, and trembled all through with a seizure, that, as new and strange, alarmed her.

Ida was, at present her only nurse, and she an inexperienced one. At length, she thought that perhaps Ethel might sleep a little, and then she went away, and left her alone. But Ethel did not sleep, and, later in the evening, when Mr. Ellis came in to wish his niece "good-night," and to see

how she was, he was so much alarmed at her appearance, that he went off, then and there, himself, in search of a doctor.—Mrs. Ellis still thought nothing of Ethel's indisposition, and wondered how her husband could be so foolish and make so much fuss over a little cold. When the doctor came, he found Ethel very ill. She was, already, in a high fever, and she required the greatest possible attention. Ethel was too drowsy, herself, to be questioned as to what she had done to bring on this severe attack, but the doctor felt certain that these symptoms must be the consequence of some very serious exposure. He put many questions to Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, trying to ascertain from them where Ethel had been, and what she had done with herself to take this cold, but they could give him but little information.

"Poor child!" said the doctor; "she is very, very ill, and I must beg you to tell me what you know that can have brought it on."

"We really know nothing," said Mr. Ellis. "She came in with her feet wet—that is all we can get out of her—and she goes to bed."

"Was anybody out with her?" asked the doctor.

"Her youngest little cousin, Lilla. She was her companion throughout the afternoon."

"Can I see her?"

Lilla was fetched and interrogated.

She would not tell all, for she knew that Ethel did not wish it, and now that she was so ill, Lilla felt herself more than ever bound to keep the promise she had made, not to tell of Robert, but she answered truthfully all the questions that were put to her.

"Your cousin got her feet wet, this afternoon, did she not?" the doctor asked, at once.

"Yes," said the child.

"At the ice, I suppose?"

"Yes," was the answer again

"Did it give way when she was on it, and did she fall in?"

"Yes," said Lilla, "but it was only near the edge of the pond, and the water went just above her ancle."

"Did you come home directly after this happened, or did you continue your walk?"

"We went for a walk," answered the child. "It was some time before we came home."

This was all that Lilla said, but it was enongh to satisfy the doctor. He was anxious about Ethel and prescribed for her, promising to return early the next morning.

"How naughty of Ethel," then said Mrs. Ellis, still angry with the suffering child. "What business had she to go near the ice? Her feet would never have got wet if she had not gone on it."

"It is done now," said her husband. "Ethel has taken cold, and to blame her is useless. Our duty is clear. We must nurse her, and try to make her well again."

Mrs. Ellis saw that her husband spoke with decision, so she unwillingly consented to see to her niece's comforts, and, by degrees, even her stony heart seemed to thaw and melt, and when, during the night, Ethel grew worse and worse, it was her own wish to remain at her side, and tend her.

"Won't you go to bed now, Aunt?" asked the child, when a cessation of the pain allowed her to speak. "You look so tired, and it must be very late."

But Mrs. Ellis would not leave her, and later in the night, Ethel was greatly surprised, as once her Aunt bent over her and kissed her forehead. This, in itself, seemed to relieve the pain, and she wondered if her Aunt, when she got well again, would still be kind to her, and kiss her.

But through the greater part of the night, Ethel did not know what went on in the room. For hours she lay unconscious, for hours her mind wandered, and her gentle spirit was so disquieted, that no continuous sense could be gathered from what she said.

"I really can't go on the ice, Robert," —"Uncle told me not to do it.—Oh! don't ask me to go into those fields—I would rather not—No! Harold—Oh! don't do what is wrong, and do say your prayers, whatever Robert says—It is not really a ghost—Oh! Uncle, if I could only tell—Oh! my head, my head—Yes, my feet are wet, but we shall be home soon, now.—Poor Harold! It was foolish of you to run away, darling, but tell the truth now—If I don't tell, will you promise not to frighten Harold again—Don't tell, Lilla—Harold, God is good, and does love us—Robert didn't mean to push me in—Indeed, Mr. Dalmer, I will never be so wicked again, I only told it because of Harold—Oh! Mamma! Mamma! If Aunt only loved me, I would try to be good—I wonder if I am wicked—It is dark dark—Oh! Mamma! Mamma! it is quite and I am so frightened. I could not help getting into bed—Oh! Mamma! look—what is that?—Do look here—here—put your hand here, Mamma! the pain is so bad,"

and Ethel, in her delirium, pressed her hand to her forehead, and cried out with the burning, burning pain.

To this, and much more, Mrs. Ellis, sat throughout the dark night listening, by Ethel's bedside. Some of her niece's words she was able to understand, others she could not interpret at all; but one idea throughout, presented itself to her mind. However much she longed, now more than ever, to hide the truth from herself, she knew that Ethel was—had been—a good child, and although, at times, she had acted wrongly, she had done so to serve others—not herself,—and she was forgiving still to those who had hated and injured her. This was evident from all her ravings.

"I wonder what Harold has done," she went on,—"Whatever you do, speak the truth—I would go, Robert, if I might—I feel so wet—Oh! my head, my head," and once again, the excessive pain checked her words.

"Can I do anything to ease your pain, Ethel?" asked her Aunt.

"I thought you would not mind my getting into bed, I was so cold, and it was so dark," said Ethel, turning away as she spoke. "No, I can't tell you why I did it, but no one made a noise but I."

Again Mrs. Ellis asked if she could relieve her.

"I feel so cold and frightened," was all Ethel's answer. "Oh! God, pray forgive me, and make me better—I will be firm, Mr. Dalmer, indeed I will," she continued,

All through the long night, Mrs. Ellis listened to the ramblings of the little sufferer,—all through the night she longed to give her some comfort. Though her heart was hard, it was a woman's yet, and she could not see such suffering, unmoved. She could not watch the sorrow depicted on that sweet little face, and listen to Ethel's cries, without some spark of pity kindling within her bosom, and a deep feeling of sorrow rising within her when she could not alleviate pain, of which, directly or indirectly, she might have been the cause.

Morning dawned, and Ethel was a little easier. Mrs. Ellis thought that she was better, and when the servant came in, and asked her mistress to go and lie down whilst she kept guard, she was glad to be released. This task of watching had been a wretched one for her; but, still it had been one, that, through the night, she could not have resigned. She was very glad that her niece was better, for when Ethel was in pain, she grew excessively uneasy, and she could not shake the feeling off. Mrs. Ellis slept for some hours. When she awoke, she immediately returned to her niece's bedside. Ethel looked very ill, and her Aunt could not help fearing that, after all, the improvement was not great. Her Uncle was sitting by her, and holding her hand in his. He, too, had been listening to those distressful, reasonless, and yet not meaningless wanderings of her innocent spirit, and had gathered a handful of suspicions and surmises.

"Poor child," he said, as he gazed at the

patient little girl: "she is more like her mother than ever I thought she was."

Mrs. Ellis made no remark. She was too proud to let her husband see that her feelings towards Ethel were changing—to let him know that she was ashamed of the way in which she had treated her. But this she was, and her self-reproaches were all the more unbearable, because she had no spark of religion to comfort her. She had these to endure, without the hope of forgiveness. She could not but feel penitent now; but it was not a penitence that could bring joy, for she knew not the promise to those who repent of their sins—she knew not that this sin of her's could be blotted out, if she were truly penitent.

Another day and another night passed without any sign of improvement. Ida, and even little Lilla, took their turns in watching their cousin. In all Ethel's wanderings, she spoke most frequently of Harold,

"I wonder what he has done," she repeated a dozen times. "I am sure Robert made him do it—No, Lilla, don't tell: I shall be angry if you do; for Robert never meant to push me in, and I am sure he is sorry now."

But Lilla had explained how the accident had happened. Her papa had obtained this, although nothing but a threat that she should never go into Ethel's room unless she told the truth, had unsealed the closed lips of the lttle girl, and made her say all that she had seen and knew.

Mr. Ellis was exceedingly grieved. Was this true? Was Ethel's perilous illness his own son's doing? He must believe it, and if the broken sentences that so unconsciously fell from her lips, had any ground at all, he had been the source of many more sorrows to her.

At length, a change appeared: for several hours the pain ceased, and Ethel was calm. She looked up, but seemed frightened as she saw her Aunt sitting beside her. If

Mrs. Ellis had only then spoken; if her pride had but allowed her to say that she was sorry for having ill-treated Ethel till now, the child would have been comforted, and would have found pleasure in her Aunt's presence, but even now she shrunk from her; and although a simple request, for some temporary relief, trembled on her lips for hours, she dared not speak it, till, again, her Uncle took the seat at her bedside. She then asked for what she had wanted. She did more, for she begged of him a favour, that she longed for with all her heart. And could he refuse the sick child, gazing into his face so sadly, so lovingly, and in an anxious, suppressed voice, saying—"May I see Harold?"

Chapter XV.

HAROLD'S REMORSE.

WHEN Robert and Harold parted from Ethel at the College gates, they hastened at once into the school. Robert begged, threatened, did everything he could to dissuade his cousin from owning to his breach of the rules, but this time Robert could see that his power was not felt, and that it was impossible to frighten Harold from his resolve.

The little boy looked very pale when he entered the Master's room: for that

was where Harold was immediately taken. He stood, with cap in hand, in the presence of Mr. Rowe.

"Lenie," said the latter, in a very stern voice, after ascertaining from Robert where he had found his cousin, "what does this mean? It is a most daring thing for a boy to run away from College, after my edict was read out that all the boys, at a given time, were to appear before me; your absence prevented the examination from going on. If I had not had a good opinion of you until now, your absence would have really convinced me that you were the one chargeable with a great act of disobedience now brought against some one of the boys. Your behaviour is most unaccountable."

Here was an opportunity for Harold once again to endeavour to conceal his guilt. There was still nothing conclusively pointing suspicion against him, but he would not suffer the temptation to have weight with him for one moment, and as

the tears rushed into his dark brown eyes, he said, fearlessly, "I am guilty, Sir. I went to Clarke's that night, and you saw me; and I ran away, now, because I was afraid to face it all."

"Is this true?" asked the Head-Master, in surprise, astonished at the frankness with which the boy's confession was made. "I never could have believed you guilty of so unparalleled an act of disobedience. To be out at night after hours, you know to be contrary to the rules of the College, do you not?"

"Yes, Sir," said Harold,—"I know I did wrong."

"And are you not ashamed to own your offence?"

"Yes, Sir," said the boy again, and now his true nature shone forth: "I am ashamed to own it, but I was more ashamed when I ran away to hide it."

The Head-Master placed his hand kindly on Harold's head.

You are a brave boy, Lenie," he said,

"and I am quite sure that some extraordinary motive got the better of you while you did this wrong,—was it not so?"

Harold made no answer.

"Why did you go out so late?" he asked. "Did anyone persuade you to do so?—And how did you manage it, after the doors were closed?"

To all these questions, Harold was silent.

"Lenie," said Mr. Rowe, now looking very angry, "I will have an answer to my questions. Tell me, at once, who else had a hand in this matter; for that you planned this escapade alone, and acted upon it, single-handed, I will not believe."

"Oh, Sir," said Harold, in a tone of earnest entreaty, "please do not make me say anything about the other fellows. I would much rather bear all the punishment alone."

"You do not know, my boy, what the punishment for this may be; besides, I have said that I would know what was

the occasion of your breaking through College rules, and I will."

But although Harold feared to disobey the Head-Master as much as any other boy in the whole school, he, from a generous reluctance to get others punished, at this moment, dreaded far more to obey him; and he remained silent.

"You had all gone to your dormitories, when this occurred," said Mr. Rowe, after again trying for some time, in vain, to persuade Harold to give up the names of those, who had taken part with him in the out-break. "Those in your's must know something about it, so I shall question them."

Harold, had he dared, would have begged him not, but the Master was, by this time, so seriously angry with him, that it was impossible for him to say another word.

The other occupants of Harold's dormitory, were led in, and the questions, that had been put to him, were repeated

to them. They, one and all, stoutly denied any knowledge of the affair: but on Mr. Rowe's turning in anger towards Harold, and accusing him of wilfulness, in owning to the committal of the act without further throwing any light upon the subject, and threatening him with punishment, most severe, one little boy, braver than his fellow-culprits, in whose breast lurked yet some spark of love for truth and justice —and some sympathy for the troubles and trials of others—stood out from the rest, and owned to having had a part in the transaction.

"Lenie could not help it," he said; "we made him do it. He was afraid if he did not, we should make him do something worse."

And then followed a confession: for in spite of all black looks, and the curses that were silently heaped upon him by Robert and Turner, he told what he knew, even owning to his own share in making Harold, for the sake of a joke, at last take Webster's letter. But

he, himself, knew nothing but what he stated. He had not seen all that took place, and like Harold, did not know till next day that the money had been stolen from the letter. So when Harold still denied having taken the money, he was not believed. No other boy in the dormitory, although they were all closely cross-examined, would own to anything.

"Did this letter ever leave your hand, Lenie?" asked Mr. Rowe, looking at the boy whom he addressed.

"Yes, Sir," was the answer.

"And you say, Lenie, that you did not take this money out of the letter?"

"I did not, Sir."

"Were you aware that it had gone?"

"No, Sir.

"How did this letter come to leave your hands before you put it again under Webster's pillow?"

"It was taken from me, Sir."

"By whom?"

"I hardly remember, Sir, which fellow it was. I think, Ellis."

"It is strange that you do not remember. —Who was it," he asked, addressing the assembled boys, "that took this letter from Lenie?"

"No one, Sir," said several boys at once.

"Ellis," said the Master, very sternly, "do you deny that you had this letter in your hand?"

"Yes, Sir," he said fearlessly, "and the other fellows will deny it too."

"Osborne, what do you say to this? You have been truthful so far. Did you see who took this letter?"

"No, Sir; but I was not in the dormitory all the time. I stood at Webster's bed."

"How long was Harold before he returned?"

Osborne hesitated.

The question was repeated.

"It seemed only a minute," was the answer.

"Was there time, do you think, for Harold to have struggled as he says, and

to have had the letter wrested from him, and the money stolen?"

"I should not have thought so."

"You would have thought that he had returned almost immediately to Webster's bedside?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Did any of the boys leave their dormitory again that night?"

"Yes, Sir," said Osborne, "Turner went to Clarke's again."

"For what purpose?" asked the Head-Master.

"To buy more things, Sir," said the boys.

"And where was the money that paid for them?"

"It was mine," said Turner. "The fellows paid me when I won my bet." And Turner felt safe in saying this, for he had taken the precaution, when he went to Clarke's, not to pay him with Webster's half-sovereign, still unchanged. He had procured silver elsewhere for it.

The boys all confirmed what Turner said. Mr. Rowe would have liked to believe Harold, but there was not one boy, who stood by him, and said that he spoke the truth. Even Osborne could not help him now, and Harold, himself, was puzzled when asked who had taken this letter from him.

"I shall send for Clarke again, to inquire further into this matter," continued Mr. Rowe, "I may be able to learn more then. A great many, if not all, of you boys, are in grevious fault. To you, Harold Lenie, suspicion points, at present, more than to the others."

He spoke sadly, and felt sad also. Harold had now so often yielded to temptation, and had, as was too evident, so often made worse his falls by telling untruths to hide them; therefore the Head-Master believed him capable of this theft; and although he was more angry with Robert and Turner, than anyone else, he told Harold, that unless he owned to having taken the money, or else gave a more

satisfactory account of who had, he must punish him with the utmost severity.

He did not believe that Harold really knew so little of the matter; and his conduct, lately, had been altogether so questionable, that Mr. Rowe feared in his own heart that Harold was now telling a lie, either to screen himself, or some one else.

Osborne would have known more of this unfortunate affair, had he never quitted his dormitory that night, but he had been sent out of the room to watch the sleeper, Webster, whilst the money was being taken by the others.

Robert and Turner were very angry at the exposure, and, with one consent, they agreed, at all events, to strengthen Mr. Rowe's suspicions against Harold, and to make him out as bad as they could.

"Lenie's worse than you think, Sir," they said, speaking simultaneously,—"and he *is* the thief now. We may have had something to do with his going to Clarke's,

that night, but then we did not hurt anybody else; and he need not have gone unless he liked, but he's done lots of other things since he's been at school. Perhaps he'll say that it was our fault he cheated to get the prize last half, for he did not get it by fair means.—We found a paper in his desk, from which he cribbed the answers to the Examination-papers, and if you ask him, Sir," said Ellis, "I don't believe he'll dare deny that he did all this."

It was a severe accusation to bring against Harold, and as Mr. Rowe turned towards him, heedless of the presence of anyone, Harold Lenie hid his face in his hands, and burst into tears. He could but say that it was even as Robert declared, and that he had obtained the prize by unfair means; but he made no excuse. He was afraid to tell how, as it were, he had been forced to do wrong—and if he did own it, would he be believed? What interest could Robert

and Turner have had in urging him to do wrong? Why should they have cared whether he won a prize, or not? He did not know—neither would the Head-Master guess, and he saw that he must bear that blame alone.

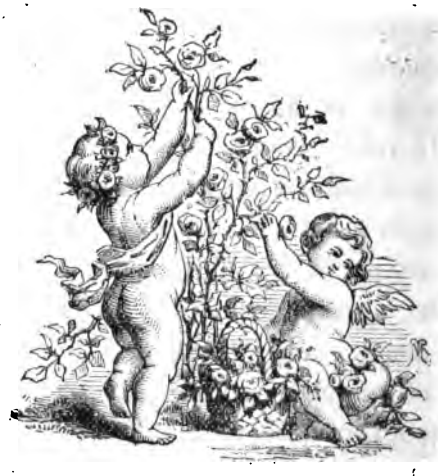
Oh! as poor Harold, from the utter despair and misery of this hour, glanced back into the past, and remembered, to his shame and sorrow, how weak and foolish he had been; how he had feared boys, and disregarded God, he could not understand himself; and as he stood accused of open breach of school-rules, and open defiance of school-authorities—and that after having fraudulently obtained a prize, which was Webster's by right, he had turned the confidence reposed in him, by him, his best friend, into an opportunity of purloining his money, he hated himself with all his heart.

From the persevering treacherous baseness of Robert's conduct towards him, Robert, in his accusation, had himself lifted the

veil; — but of wrong done to himself, abject, cast to the ground in his remorse, he could not think of that. His own thoughts were black enough—they filled his mind; and he only wondered how he could have been so wicked. Self-accused —though, to a certain extent, before others, wrongly accused—Harold sobbed on in the presence of his Master and school-fellows. He was not ashamed of his tears. His sorrow was so intense, that openly to give way to his feelings, never occurred to him as unmanly.

Webster, in all probability, would know all: Harold would, himself, be expelled the school, and "what then?" The thoughts of Ethel's grief—his Uncle's anger—were fresh drops in his bitter cup of sorrow: his sobs became faster and louder, remorse more acute; and throwing himself, in a burst of anguish, at the Master's feet, he did not even dare to ask for pardon. He was ordered to his dormitory till he was more himself again, and he would then

be called to re-appear before the Master. In silent submission he obeyed, and left the room.



CHAPTER XVI.

WEBSTER TO THE RESCUE.

NOT until the following day was Harold again summoned into the Head-Master's presence. Still he revealed nothing concerning Webster's money; still he pleaded guilty of unfairly winning the prize, but he gave no explanation how the answers to the questions had been obtained. Mr. Rowe was more angry than Harold had ever yet seen him. and told him he had acted very wickedly. He believed fully that Harold had stolen Webster's money, or that he knew who

had, and said that his misdeeds so quickly following one upon another, could be punished with nothing less than expulsion from the College. He said that for many reasons he was sorry to proceed to this extremity, for Harold had worked hard, and had, to all outward appearance, hitherto conducted himself well: but these underhand, dishonest practices, of which he was guilty, rendered the severest punishment necessary.

Suspicions were strongly against him; and the Master believed, when he still said that he did not know who had taken the money, that he was adding a lie to the theft that he had committed. Osborne was the only boy who said that Harold had been forced to fetch this letter. The others agreed, still, that he had fetched it of his own accord.

For more than an hour was Harold in Mr. Rowe's private study; and notwithstanding his refusals to answer the questions that were put to him, there was something

about the lad, that irresistibly wound him round the Master's heart, and it was with the deepest sorrow that Mr. Rowe, at last, dismissed him to his dormitory, with his sentence unrecalled.

Alone once more, he flung himself across his bed in an agony of tears. His present penitence was indeed great, whatever his past transgressions might have been. He felt thoroughly miserable, with no one near to speak one word of consolation. With heartfelt longings did the desolate orphan boy yearn for his mother in his grief. Were she at his side, would she comfort him most or blame him? He knew not. He thought she would blame him very much, but then he was sure that she would comfort him too, and he would have some one to flee to, some one in whom he could confide, and who would, at least, love him, though he had been such a wicked boy!—He had almost forgotten his mother of late—tenderly he wished it possible to see her now—or Ethel. Could he but see her, and

tell her, himself, before from others she might learn, the story of his disgrace. Withal, Harold was generous-hearted, and, even now in this plight, he did not wonder, as many another would have done, what punishment was to belong to the others—to those who had led him astray, and had been the cause of his trouble?—He thought but little of them—only of his own falls; of his gentle mother, whose parting counsels he had so entirely banished from his memory; and of that dear sister, whose love he had spurned; and of Mr. Dalmer, and the warnings by him spoken, when he had turned a deaf ear to what was said.

On all this, and on the anger of God, Harold dwelt, and his punishment seemed just. These thoughts weighed upon his mind and spirit, and the little transgressor, yet only nine years old, felt himself crushed beneath a load of sorrows, almost too heavy for him to bear. For some time he remained sobbing aloud. At length he was suddenly interrupted. A small hand was laid upon

his shoulder, and looking up, his eyes met those of Webster's.

Again he buried his face, and hid it from the intruder's view.

"Oh! go away, Webster," he pleaded, sorrowfully. "Whatever you think about me, don't come to tell me now: I can stand anything but that; I can face anyone but you."

"Don't talk so, Harold," said Webster, "to your best friend. Whatever others may think of you, I like you just as much as ever."

"Then you don't know, Arthur. They haven't told you yet," said Harold, stifling his sobs.

"I've heard everything, Harold, and I don't believe half, so I've run up here to tell you so; for I thought it might be a comfort to you to know that you had one fellow, at least, on your side; and that all the other fellows know it too."

Harold's sobs increased. Webster's goodness, and forgiveness of injuries, had more

power to soften his heart than anything else in the world.

"Oh Arthur," he said, "if I only hadn't wronged you, I should not care half so much: but if you could know how I hated to do it, and how miserable I have been ever since they made me win that prize, you'd forgive it all."

"I do now," said Webster, "forgive you, Harold, freely and fully—but what I want now, is to hear, from yourself, everything that they have done, and that you have: and all about it."

Harold complied, and told Webster his tale from beginning to end, from the very first, when Robert had laughed him out of saying his prayers, whilst he was still at home, and had set him against Ethel. Then he went on to say how, after he had come to school, his cousin, and some other fellows had made him learn the Examination paper, that had won him the prize, so threatening him if he failed to win it, because he felt it to be wrong to

do so; and when he related the whole history of his going to Clarke's, and taking the letter, and how he had been driven to do both, Webster pitied Harold from his heart, thinking how miserable he must have been whilst the fight between good and evil had been going on. Webster wondered how Ellis and Turner could have been so wicked. Trying to think what could be done to clear Harold, he reflected that there were other boys in the same dormitory, and they might know who had taken the money, and Webster determined, if possible, to get one of them to confess the truth, and so put an end to the scandal against Harold.

Webster begged his heart-broken friend not to fret any more about it, and when Harold spoke of the shame of a dismissal, tried to console him, adding that, after all, he might not be expelled.

When they parted, Harold felt to love Webster more than he had ever loved him before, and was inwardly resolving, that,

should anything induce the Head-Master to revoke his decision, he would renounce his unprincipled companions, and with only Webster for a friend, would try to grow like him, and acquire that strength, for want of which, he had so grievously suffered.

Harold, taught by experience, saw clearly, now, where his great fault lay, and he longed for opportunities to prove to himself that his resolutions were made in earnest, and that he could serve God in future, and do his duty, although, of late, he had so miserably failed.

Webster lost no time in setting about what he so eagerly wished to achieve. He looked up one of the boys whom he knew to be in league with Ellis and Turner, but one better principled, and more good-natured than the others, hoping to be able to influence him.

Cowardly boys would have been afraid to meddle in such a matter, but Webster thought only of his friend's sad position, and

he pleaded his cause so earnestly, and spoke so eloquently of Harold's repentant sorrow, and the cruel and dishonourable way in which he had been treated, and also of the heavy punishment threatening the orphan boy, that the heart of Wallace was touched, and he consented to go straightway to the Head-Master, and make open confession to him.

Perhaps Webster would have found it more difficult to engage Wallace in this hard task, had there not been another reason why the sad picture of shame and sorrow struck him as peculiarly mournful, for Wallace had just heard, what Webster had not, that Lenie's sister was dangerously ill, and that a message had come to the College for him to go home that afternoon.

"What," he thought "would this double grief be to bear—his sister, perhaps, dying, and he expelled from school."

Seconded by such thoughts, Webster's words were effectual, and they started together for the Head-Master's study.

It was a disgraceful tale to unfold.—How elder boys had ensnared a younger into helping them to do evil, and then had left him with the suspicion lying upon him.

Mr. Rowe's countenance darkened. He could not have believed that so bad a set of boys were inmates of the College. The punishment of all would be great—that of Wallace less severe than the rest, as he had been honest enough to make this confession.

"Go now," he continued, "and say that I have called the school together in the College Hall. In ten minutes I shall be amongst you, when I expect to find every boy in his place."

The mere summons, assembling them on so short notice, in the Hall, sent alarm through the boys' hearts. It was here, that they took their meals, and joined in prayer; but, hardly ever was the Hall used for any other purpose; except on speech-days, and rare, or it might be, singular, high

occasions; unless when some occurrence, of a special nature, within the school, collected them here.

"It's those fellows, again," whispered several of the boys, as they fell into their places. "Dormitory four, is in no end of rows. Lenie's been had up, before Rowe, ever so many times, already."

The quiet, cautiously-made remarks, were put a stop to, by the entrance of the Head-Master, himself, exactly at the time given out, followed by the other masters, who came at his wish, to hear him.

The look of unwonted sternness, which clouded the brow of Mr. Rowe, as he walked to his seat, midway on one side of the long Hall, plainly well-confirmed those low-spoken, current surmises; giving assurance of some deeply moved anger. The boys stood in rank after their forms: the greater number facing him along the opposite Hall-side; the rest, across either end; all under command of his eye. On his own side, right and left, not one.

Nearly midmost of the younger array, lining the Hall-end, on his left, stood Harold Lenie: and on him, did they turn that way, all eyes could rest. As the Head-Master took in the survey of the auditory he was about addressing, his glance fell upon this boy; for a moment dwelt there, with almost, you would have said, a mournful tenderness.

Lenie was now nine years old; a perfect child in years; yet old, he thought, in sorrow. His eyes, swollen, and red with weeping, he never lifted from the ground: —no, not in answering to his name, as it was read out on the College list. Every boy was present. Two hundred names, on the College-books, were successively called: and a boy was there to answer to each.

"I little supposed, boys," Mr. Rowe began, speaking in a sad, but indignant tone, "and I think as little could you, when we parted, the other day, after inquiring into a matter discreditable to

our school discipline, that I should so soon have to call you again together, to go upon the same ground, with disclosures of new criminality, and the old aggravated tenfold.

But I have, since then, gained information that most unexpectedly puts entirely a new face on the transactions that were then before us to be judged and reprobated: unfortunately, turning the accuser into the accused—the accused into the more fitting accuser; while inculpating others who stood free of suspicion;—informations, that, while they deeply pain me, you may be satisfied to hear, carry no accusations withoutside the door of one already ill-signalized dormitory. One consolation—in the midst of nothing less than a grief—I bring with me:—that I can lift a false accusation from an innocent head. When we met before, it was to ascertain what boy had gone out at night, after closing of the College-gate, to fetch supplies for a supper, going on, when all

should have been in bed;—and suspicion rested on a boy in dormitory four.—I must now go back to speak of this, now, along with other far graver offences, in themselves, and in their consequences, enacted by boys belonging to this room. —Boys of dormitory number four, one and all, fall out, and come forward."

In one part, and another, over the long Hall, several boys took a step or two from their ranks, and then directed by a gesture, formed themselves in a line, on the left hand of the Master, some way in advance of the lowest form. The movement set Harold, as the least, at the end inward to the Hall; and an eye, that could aloft have commanded the scene, must have been moved by the still handsome little face,—the well-limbed and grown figure, topt with the cluster of dark brown curls, to admiration and pity.

Ellis, Turner, Wallace, Osborne, Lenie, and ten others, now stood together.

"You," he then said, never lifting his

eyes off them, "at all events will know, of what I am about to accuse you; you, whose conscience must have been dead; you, who must have been lost to all feelings of shame and honour; when you acted as, of late, you have done. That night-walk, was a well-imagined piece of disobedience, put upon Harold Lenie, the youngest, and bravest, and best of you, to execute; whilst you, the contrivers, whose nocturnal revel he was employed in ministering to, sat, at home, safe from the encounter of night-watchers."

The Master spoke with so much severity and sternness, that the eyes of nearly all the boys were intently fixed upon his face. Some few, who had once boasted that they knew no fear, no shame, knew both now; as a misgiving that perchance *their* misdoings might have come to light, crept up, with a heart sickening, in their thoughts; and *they* could not look up.

"When this matter was inquired into," he continued, "you were none of you

true enough to yourselves, and to your fellow, to acknowledge your own more positive share in the exploit; and the blame was suffered to rest upon him, alone, whom you had made your representative.—Ellis, Turner, to you I speak.—I go back to a matter earlier, and a graver infraction of our school-code of right and wrong. At one of our late unpleasant discussions, you accused Harold Lenie," he added, singling out, as he spoke, with his eye, the first-named, "of having, at our last junior Examination, fraudulently become possessed of the answers to the Examinations, but you said no more.—Robert Ellis, in so accusing his cousin," he went on, turning to the line facing him, "once, at least, in his life-time, has spoken the truth,—a piece of a truth, at any rate. There is another—a larger fragment, which he—a lad of some discretion, in it's own way—thought as well left unspoken, and so did not speak; and which, therefore, as fitting that you, as well as I, should

know it; I will now speak of him. The fraud was Robert Ellis'—though not, indeed, his singly. He had a trusty coadjutor, and, it would appear, an able one, in Turner. These two, for some reason of their own, with which I am not, nor greatly care to be, acquainted—hardly a good one—had together, in their own minds, determined that Lenie should come out the winner of this prize. I cannot track the steps, any more than I can unravel the motives of these workers in the dark. But they are able to bring to Harold Lenie, ready written, a little while before the Examination, the questions with the fit answers; —good elder students! Good elder cousin! —They offer him the papers—he pushes them back, and will have nothing to do with them—they leave them with him—he will not learn them—they insist, and make him learn them. More than this—they return, and they make sure that he has learnt them. He shelters himself in the determination that he will not use

them—they are wily—they suspect in him an honest treachery towards themselves—they wring from him the promise that he will use them. You ask me, by what power they rule in his will? I cannot tell you, nor dare I wish that I could. Who that will keep his own soul clear, can sift the mystery of the sway, which the wicked, and wily elder, who set themselves in earnest, and with application to acquiring the mastery of a spirit, tender in years, guileless, coming new from the pure, calm bosom of a home—can obtain over him—to mislead him. They possess themselves of his fears—of his hopes—who can tell?—Of the stained secrets of his soul. Then there is that inexplicable sway of a stronger over a weaker spirit, which, we call, ascendancy;—and remember—with one of these, it is not at first school-boy over school-boy,—it is the home-superiority of the elder over the younger relation. What matter how gained? The power was there, and it was used. This is the case. Here

is the little competitor in the race; he has his own ardour—his own honest ambition. He has his own good and true ability for the contest,—lively—and for one so young, vigorous talents. He has conscience; he would fain obey his conscience, and do right.—He shall not! He has affection; he loves his friend; he will strive in his own strength, and recoils from robbing his friend.—He shall! He has honour, and he will not violate his own clear self-respect.—He shall! And the willers of wrong prevail. Here is the school-prize: as respects the school, at large, the only offered reward to those who have best exerted themselves to do the bounden work of the school. They have, in themselves, other better well-springs of exertion, —the desire of satisfying the hope of their friends at home. Webster, the rival, works hard and steadily, and, were all known, wins,—but all is not known, and Lenie carries off the prize. He takes, but whilst he holds out his hand to take,

he hates it. I remember, now, what then I could not understand:—in the hand held out to receive the book, a sudden, instantaneous little movement of repulsion. Had the hand been free, it would have strengthened into rejection. Bound under an evil spell, the hand is not free, and Lenie accepts the prize, reluctantly, and the honour of another."

The speaker was silent. Impressed by what had been spoken, his audience were. Only, that, as if in answer, from the heart of *their* silence, and somewhere, high midway of the broad Hall-floor, one single solitary sob rose.

Mr. Rowe's face grew very pale as he resumed speaking.

"And, without shame, you acted thus," he continued; "and could dare to accuse this boy of the transgression, which, in him, you, yourselves, had committed. You did more to ruin his name and character. That supper-night, when Lenie went out to make your purchases, why did he go?

You know, well. It was on his return to his dormitory, and yours, after a confabulation of hours, with Webster, on his birth-night, ending at his bedside, that you asked him entangling question upon question, and amongst other things, sifted out that Webster had received a letter from his mother, containing a half-sovereign, which treasures he had placed, for safety, under his pillow. What next? You, at once, resolved and planned mischief. You said you would frighten Webster, by taking from him this letter, till morning, when after he had searched long for it in vain, you would return it to him; Harold Lenie's eye had seen where the letter lay; Harold Lenie's hand was the one to steal it. Over and over again he refused. Then he has a choice offered him:—the night-adventure, instead,—and he, rather than lend his hand to a manœuvre, which, with nothing in it, as you put it, of actual dishonesty, has yet the colour of dishonesty, with no

injurious treachery to his friend has yet the smack of treachery, — for peace and quiet takes your offer,—affronts all the imaginary fears and any actual dangers that the night may harbour for him,—so young, singly threading the dark;—for his honour's sake he dares all and goes. And this was the time," continued the Head-Master, turning to the assembled school, "that the high-spirited, gallant lads, his elder schoolfellows, conceived the idea of thieving,—of thieving! Aye,—worse still, of making another, a little boy, thieve for them,—the boy who goes and does your errand," he added, again addressing himself to the guilty, "and returns, expecting that as he has performed his part, you will perform yours. But what have you planned in his absence? you, Ellis and Turner, for it was you who spoke and planned, whilst others listened and acquiesced. You had not given Harold Lenie enough money to pay for what he was instructed to bring you, and an easy way

to make good the deficiency offered itself to steal." Mr. Rowe paused, and looked, for a minute, in silence on his guilty collegians. "You resolved again. But it was a dangerous thing to do. You knew that, and it was Turner's inventive spirit that this time came to the rescue. He pretended a bet with Ellis and others that Lenie, on his return, would extract Webster's letter from under his pillow without waking the sleeper. They took, of course, the ideal bet, which was only a subterfuge to induce Lenie once more to act on their behalf. I am thankful to say that the younger boys had no part in this matter. They knew nothing of the plot, and believed that the wager was a true one.

"Lenie, on the first assault, refused to do as asked, but when shewn how necessary it was that Turner should win the money, that was to clear a debt for which, else, he would himself alone, they said, be held responsible, he, at last, reluctantly

yielded. Was ever such treachery known amongst boys before? The sequel follows naturally. The letter is withdrawn from under the sleeping head. The letter, against the promise made to Lenie that it should remain in his hand, is, by force wrested from him before he has extricated himself from a struggle, the enclosed half-sovereign taken out by Ellis, and the letter is then returned to Lenie, who, agitated and unsuspecting, is only too glad to replace it there, whence he had most unwillingly sleighted it away. The money is missed. Lenie, who confessedly took the letter, is charged with the disappearance of its contents, and has no explanation to give. The true thieves declare him such, and too effectively fasten the suspicion upon his sole head, whose guiltless hand they had used in their theft. Ellis dared the distinction of soiling his fingers, but every boy who first or last conspired in the plot and was silent when Lenie was unjustly accused, was, and remains an accomplice

in the deed. And you could suffer an innocent boy to lie under the accursed imputation of your own heinous guilt. You were letting him be cast out at the doors of this College stamped with dishonour without one word to save him! Is there one of you who does not shrink back into himself bowed down in his inmost soul with shame; and you Ellis have so treated your own cousin, an orphan, fatherless, motherless, when, as his natural protector on the grave, coming so young into a world of strangers, he might with reason have looked up to you, the son of his dead mother's brother, and his six years' elder, for something else than allurement from the right path to begin with,—and a charge that would have spurned him disgraced from our threshold to end with." He turned from him to the others. "You may all well recoil from my look,—you the pilferers,—you the pitiless, may well fix your eyes upon the ground, lest they should encounter those of your schoolfel-

lows,—you should not look into the faces of honest lads, who must scorn you now that they know you,—who must have hated to hear of proceedings that cast a slur upon this school; that disgrace the house in which they have mixed with you as friends." No sorrow was visible in the faces of the two ringleaders, though they stood thus condemned before masters and boys. They could not but feel shame, albeit no sorrow. One boy of the line, indeed, sobbed, and that was Harold Lenie, the orphan, the little central figure that drew all eyes by its beauty and its mixed passion, and he sobbed convulsively, as though his heart would break. The tears glistened in Webster's eyes, but they did not fall. Wallace and Osborne were sad.

"I shall not tell you through what channels the truth in these different matters became known to me," resumed Mr. Rowe, "but it is right you should know it was not Lenie, the persecuted, who has, at last, broken silence to clear himself and

confound his accusers. Not the wronged boy, who was willing to screen his wrongers, and let their blame rather than accuse them, fall upon himself."

"May I tell, Sir?" said Wallace, stepping out, and looking up for the answer, he read assent. "I told it all," he went on, "from first to last—what we had all of us done. And for my share of it, I am heartily sorry and ashamed, and," continued he, turning in the direction—"I beg Lenie to forgive me—and I hope, Sir," again looking up—"that whatever in future my own faults may be, they may hurt no one else, but lie on my own shoulders."

A look of pleasure from Mr. Rowe acknowledged promise in the confession.

But the softened expression passed. That more than angry look which the boys so dreaded in the Master whom they loved and revered, came back, and he turned towards the two boys now standing together at the head of the arraigned Dor-

mitory, whom the leadership in offences had distinguished for high chastisement.

"You, Robert Ellis, and you, Edward Turner," he said, "are no longer pupils of this school, go and get yourselves ready for leaving it. I shall write to your parents to-day, and to-morrow you go. You will sleep in a separate part of the College to-night, and you do not take another meal in this Hall."

The blow struck sensibly. The sentence had been hardly expected, though so well deserved. And as the two boys passed the desk where the Head-Master was standing, their heads hung low, and they crept unsteadily under the felt indignant eyes of all their comrades to the door and escaped. There was a dead hush, and reflexions were awakened in the heart of each. A lesson had been taught to-day. To be strong in purpose, to fear no one, and to resist evil at the onset, — to resist the first temptation. Many a little boy standing then in the College Hall,

compared himself with Harold Lenie. How would he have acted in his place? Worse, no doubt—many another boy would have been less honorable than Harold Lenie, if similarly tried.

Mr. Rowe again spoke when the door was closed. "You have heard now, boys," he said, "of wrong deeds done by your own companions and schoolfellows that must have shocked you. It has been irresistibly painful to me to have to speak as I have spoken—much more to have to act as I have acted; but for the sake of the school, for the sake of the pupils in it, it would be impossible to retain in this house boys who have shewn themselves corrupt through and through as Ellis and Turner have done. I reserve judgment on the conduct of the other boys for further consideration; and let this be a lesson, boys, to you," he continued, "one and all, to guard truth as you would guard your own lives. Be honorable, steadfast in doing what is right, and never allow blame

that is your due to fall on the head of another. Cling to your own knowledge of right and wrong. Break from the companionship of any one who would tempt you to swerve from the straight path. When you do wrong, be rather ashamed to conceal than to own it. But set your endeavour to hold your conscience so clear of offence, that, with the day overhead, you can freely and fearlessly look any one in the face, and that, night after night, you can lay your head to rest on your pillow, at peace with the world and with yourselves."

Mr. Rowe ceased speaking, and left the desk at which he had been standing.

"Come this way, Lenie," he said, beckoning to the boy as he passed out of the room, "I will speak to you in my study."

Harold obeyed and followed.

"Oh, Sir," he began at once, as the study door closed upon him, and falling on his knees before his Master, "I am so sorry,

so very, very sorry for all that I have done. I will never be wicked again."

"I believe it, my poor boy," said Mr. Rowe most kindly, placing his hand on the curly head, so hot and feverish. I believe you will be a good boy for the future, and never forget what you have learnt to-day; but you must compose yourself now. You are quite forgiven."

"Thank you, Sir," said Harold, feeling grateful.

"I am sorry, Harold," said Mr. Rowe, taking a seat and drawing the lad towards him, with his arm encircling his waist; "I am sorry that I was so harsh towards you before I learnt the truth—did you not think me very unkind?"

"No, Sir." answered Harold, "I always knew you were very kind."

"Even when I told you that you must leave the school?"

"Yes," said the boy, "because I seemed to deserve it, Sir."

"It was brave and generous of you,

Harold, to try to shield your companions when they had behaved so badly towards you, but it would have been better and wiser if you had told me the truth when I questioned you before; would it not?"

"Yes, Sir," said Harold, "I see it all now."

"And will you promise me to be a good boy now,—to give up bad companions, and to do your duty at school, as you can do it so well,—if you will only follow the dictates of your own conscience?"

"Yes, Sir," answered Harold quickly. "Thank you for your kindness. I will always try in future to please you. I will never forget what you say."

"Very well," said Mr. Rowe, "then it is over now; we will try not to return upon it. Remember your promise. Be a good boy for the time to come, Harold,—let your single motive in life, whether at home or at school, be to please God by fulfilling your duty, and then God will

bless you, strengthen you, and make you happy."

Harold dried his tears, and once again the bright eyes met those of his Master, who looking at the pretty boy standing beside him drew him, with his arm, closer and closer to his heart. He thought what a stormy, sorrowful life was that of this child.

"I have something more to say to you now, Harold," he continued. You are to go home this afternoon, because your sister is ill and desires to see you."

"Ethel ill?" asked Harold in surprise. "She was all right the other day."

"I believe she has taken a violent cold. I heard she was very ill. You had better go home at once. This morning's bad business has already hindered your complying with your Uncle's wishes too long."

The impressionable boy's face grew pale, and he left the room. As Harold went, once again the Master's hand rested upon his little head, and his heart warmed towards

the orphan boy, with his tear-stained, sorrowful face, and his opinion again revived that he had once held with regard to Harold. He was a good lad, weak — as little boys, with no one to lead them right, will be: but there was within him the germ of all that was good; and by and bye Mr. Rowe firmly believed it would spring up and, in season, ripen into character.

"Good-bye, Harold," added the Head-Master kindly. "God bless you, my child."

As he spoke, he pressed the boy's hand kindly, and, in that hour, Harold, who had always loved his Master, loved him a thousand-fold more. A feeling, which he could not define, inspired him, and a smile beamed on his countenance. In that smile the Master saw his labour had met with its reward. He knew that the boy's heart was won, and he augured for him a better and a brighter future.

Chapter XVII.

HAROLD AT HOME.

A FEW minutes later, Harold was on his way home. He was startled that his Uncle had sent for him because Ethel was ill, for he had, himself, seen her so recently, and then she had been quite well.

He hurried off, in his excitement almost forgetting the scene that was but just over. He went straight to his sister's room, and was shocked on seeing how ill he looked, but he said nothing, and threw his arms round her neck and kissed her.

"I am so glad you have come, Harold," she said, fixing her eyes upon her brother's face, and noticing—faint as she was—that his eyes were swollen as if he had been crying.

Ethel was already very weak. Her constitution naturally delicate, had suffered what would have shaken a stronger.

Mr. Ellis was sitting by her bed-side, but thinking that she might like to talk to her little brother alone, and after making sure that she had everything she wanted, he rose and left them.

"I have been so longing to see you, Harold," she began at once.—"I want to know how you have got on since you went back to school, and why you ran away. I know you don't like to tell me things, but still I think you would tell me this, if you knew how anxious I am to hear it."

And Harold, different as the wont had become of the school-boy, yielded, and told his sister all.

"I wish I had never kept things from

you, Ethel," he said, and the tears trickled down his cheeks; "I should not have got into all these rows then, but I thought it was girlish to tell you things, and so I didn't, and because Robert begged me not."

Ethel sighed. She could not bear to hear of Robert. She knew that he had done Harold so much harm, and now that she knew all that Harold had really been guilty of, she shuddered.

"No wonder you were unhappy last holidays, Harold," she said. "How you must have hated that prize."

"So I did, Ethel, and I do now more than ever, and to-morrow I shall take it back to Webster."

"You would not have been so wicked if you had said your prayers every day, Harold: or, if you had done wrong once or twice, you would have owned it long ago."

"I was ashamed to say my prayers, Ethel the fellows would have made such fun of me."

"It would have been wrong of them to do so. But it was worse in you to care for them, and to give up praying because they might laugh: for you knew what was right, and that you ought not to have been ashamed to pray to God."

"I will try never to be so again, Ethel, indeed I will. I am going to turn over quite a new leaf, — but you do not know what it is to be afraid of Robert."

"I do," said Ethel, and she gazed earnestly at her brother. "It was that which made me tell a lie about the gipsies, Harold. Robert threatened to hurt you, if I did not."

"Then you told that lie for me, Ethel," said her brother, remorsefully; "and I teazed you for it?"

"Never mind that now, Harold. You did not mean to be unkind, and it was wicked of me to do wrong for you,—Mr. Dalmer said so, and told me that we ought to love God, and fear Him more

than any one, and I have tried to do so since, and GOD has helped me."

"I wish I had tried, too, Ethel. I wish I hadn't done all these things at school. It will be so hard to be different now."

"So it will, Harold, but we must not mind doing what is hard for CHRIST, who suffered so much for us."

"You must pray, Ethel, that GOD will make me a good boy. GOD will hear your prayer."

"We will both pray," said Ethel, "GOD will hear us both. We will say a prayer now;" and Harold kneeling down for the first time for many months, and reverently putting his hands together, Ethel uttered so solemn and beautiful a prayer for the little penitent, that his tears, as he said, "Amen," were fast falling. As he rose, and his eyes rested on his sister's face, the words involuntarily escaped his lips:—"You will get better again, Ethel: shan't you?"

"I hope so," she answered, "but GOD

knows best. Mamma was only ill a few days, you know, before she died. Perhaps, I may die too."

"Die?" said the little boy,—"you die, Ethel!—Oh no! you can't mean that, you're only a little ill, and will be all right again, very soon."—But though the boy spoke these words so eagerly, his countenance fell, and a deathly pallor overspread it. A fearful dread overwhelmed his little spirit, as he thought of the possibility of losing his sister; and he kissed her again and again.

"Shall you be very sorry if I die, Harold," asked his sister after a time. "I thought you had left off caring for me long ago."

"I thought I had too, Ethel," but it was only that I was wicked, and ashamed to talk to you," he said, covering her hand with kisses. "I love you better than I ever did in all my life before, and I shall never be happy again if you die. You must not talk about it, Ettie. I cannot bear to hear you."

"I am so happy to think that you really love me, Harold," she said again. "I think I loved you too much, for it made me do wrong; but I am so glad that I remembered Mr. Dalmer's words, and kept off the ice. If I die from falling in, I should not have liked it to come upon me through disobedience."

"Was it falling in the ice that made you ill?" asked Harold.—"It was that brute, Robert.—I'll serve him out.—I'm not a bit afraid of him now, and I hope GOD will punish him well for this."

"Oh! Harold," said his sister, "you frighten me so when you talk like that. I hope GOD will forgive Robert.—What makes me more unhappy than anything now, is that Robert is so wicked. You must forgive him, Harold, and you must ask GOD to do so also."

"I can't do either," said Harold, "don't ask me."

Ethel was already tired, and exhausted with speaking; still she made an effort to say something more.

"I feel so ill, Harold," she continued, "that I cannot talk much; but do say that you will try to forgive Robert, and pray to God to make you really do so, and ask him to make Robert sorry."

It was only the tears in Ethel's eyes, only her pale face, only her supplicating tone, with the dread returning upon Harold that had possessed him once, and the fear of worrying and grieving his sister, who was so ill, that wrung a promise from him now.

"If you wish it," he said, "I will try to forgive him. I won't ask God to punish him as I meant to do."

Again Ethel asked Harold to kiss her: then quite exhausted, she sank back on her pillow, and did not speak again.

Harold called the maid who was sitting in the next room. He was afraid to be any longer alone with his sister. He would not have been left so long there, if the Doctor had not told Mr. Ellis, that he thought Ethel had something on her mind.

to say to her brother: and that for tranquillizing her, it was desirable they should be left alone together, giving her the occasion of talking to him without reserve. Mr. Ellis had used the first opportunity of complying with the Doctor's advice.

For a long while Ethel lay without speaking. They were anxious about the possible next turn of her illness, and were trying continually to prevail on her to take nourishment, but it was with difficulty that Ethel eat anything. Very frequent were the doctor's visits, and at each he shewed that he thought less and less favourably of her case. Ethel was very ill, and they knew it. For hours she lay still, noticing no one. Harold very rarely left his sister's side. At times she was very uneasy, and her mind wandered. Mrs. Ellis, then, invariably left the room.

"If I could only be sure that Harold would say his prayers, and not be made naughty, I would not care where he slept. I would not have told a lie for any other

reason, but I am sorry now—I wish some one loved me as Mamma did—No, Lilla." And then Ethel spoke loudly, and tried to sit up. "Don't tell of Robert; he did not mean to do it."

So would Ethel go on speaking; the sad story of her short life, revealing itself unintentionally to those about her. Slowly and unconsciously, Mrs. Ellis had become convinced of her niece's goodness, and she could not bear to think of losing her. Bad as she was; deadened as her conscience had been for years; she could not stifle the reproofs that would force themselves upon her. She had, herself, been the doer of grevious wrong to Ethel for nearly two years, and if she died from this cold, her son had killed her.

Ethel, herself, was happy. Her Uncle was so kind to her: he sat so many hours by her side, and spoke so gently, and so like her mother to her; and Harold was so affectionate, that the little girl, who had suffered so much of late from illtreat-

ment, felt quite happy in the consciousness that she was beloved. Yet was there evidently something at work, causing Ethel anxiety. She thought so much of Robert, she spoke so often of him, although his name was never mentioned to her, that they wondered whether she wished to see him or not. She made frequent inquiries for him—where he was—what he was doing, but no one cared to satisfy her inquiries; and if she heard a step on the stairs, she asked if he had returned from school, and was coming in to see her.

Whenever her mind was uneasy, she seemed to be thinking of him.

Chapter XVIII.

ROBERT IN THE SICK ROOM.

THE day after Harold had been fetched home from school, he returned to take back the book, that he had received as a prize, to its rightful owner. He hunted out Webster, and pressed him to accept it, but he would not keep the book until Harold gave it, himself, to Mr. Rowe, who bestowed it upon him.

"I can't tell you, Arthur," said Harold, "how ashamed I am for what I've done,

It's awfully good of you to forgive it all so easily."

Webster shook his friend's hand.

"It has been worse for you, Harold, than for me, but don't let us think anything more about it now, we'll talk of something else." The subject dropped, and they spoke of other things, till Harold thought that it must be getting late, and hurried home. He could not bear to be away from Ethel's sick room long together.

On the same day, Robert, in disgrace, left school. When he returned home, he felt afraid to meet his father.

Mr. Ellis, at the time, was with Ethel.

"There's Robert," said the latter, starting up, when she recognized his step in the hall; "I am glad that he has come home," and then she lay back, again, quite lost in thought. Why was she glad? Mr. Ellis wondered; why should she care whether Robert, who had so ill-treated her, had returned home, or not? He could not imagine; but as far as his own feelings

were concerned, he would much rather that his son had remained away.

When later in the evening, they met, such a look was fixed upon Robert, as he never forgot in all his life. That his father believed him the tormentor, and if she died, the murderer of Ethel, he fully understood, and he cowered beneath the glance.

"I hope you are satisfied with your own work, Robert," he said.—"I do not think that even your mother will shield you now. Do you know what you have done?" he continued, catching hold of his son's arm. "You have been the cause of all Ethel's troubles ever since she has been here, you have misled her little brother, and now, I believe, you have killed your cousin."

"Killed her!" asked Robert, in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Why, that you pushed her into the ice, the other day, when she took a violent cold."

"A violent cold doesn't kill," said Robert, jeeringly.

"You don't know that, Sir," said his father, "the doctor gives no hope."

Robert changed colour; the grave word, gravely spoken, alarming him.

"What liars they all are," he muttered, "to say that I killed her."

"You have been the cause of this illness, and if she dies, it will be your doing."

"I don't care if it is," said Robert,—"where's the Mother—I want to see her," and leaving his father further enraged against him, he went to look for his mother, hoping still from her to find protection, but he was mistaken. She who had, by blind indulgence, fostered evil in her son, and had therefore led him on to this grand climax, had no smile for him now. A most uncomfortable feeling had come across her that she could not define: she was beginning to recoil from her work, manifest in Robert; and she was glad to throw blame, that seemed attach-

ing to herself, on any one else. It was satisfactory to her to hate and upbraid Robert, now, for what he had done.

Then he had been expelled with peculiar dishonour, from Sandown College, and this, to a man and woman as proud as Mr. and Mrs. Ellis were, was a sad grievance. So Robert found no comfort —had no friend, and all that he looked for, was an interview with Harold, whom he inwardly swore to punish, for all the trouble that he and his sister had, as he considered, brought upon him. But Harold remained at his sister's side, and Robert had no chance of seeing him alone.

Every request that Ethel made was granted, as of course, and as she frequently asked for Robert, he was desired, by his father, to go to her. As long as possible Robert put off doing so, but, at last, he was obliged to obey. It was the first time that Robert had ever been in a sick room, and he shuddered as he went in.

The darkened windows, the untasted food, the medicine glass and labelled phials, the propped-up pillows, and the pale-faced head resting on them, all spoke to Robert of sickness and sorrow. He could not bear to approach the bed—Ethel looked so ill and altered. Harold was seated at her side, holding her hand. Thought upon thought crowded into Robert's mind, and he wished himself anywhere else. He did not know what to say—all he could do was to dart an angry look at Harold. Ethel's observant eye caught this.

"I wanted to see you, Robert," she said, putting out her thin hand. "I wanted to ask you not to be angry with Harold."

"Little sneak," was the answer; "I'll settle with him."

"I'm so ill," said Ethel. "Robert, I believe I'm dying, and I want you to promise not to be cross to Harold. He is not a sneak. He hasn't told anyone but me."

Robert was awed. Answer roughly one who, herself, said that she was dying, he felt he could not.

Ethel saw the hesitation. "You will promise, won't you," she again pleaded.

"You're not really dying, Ethel," said Robert, while Harold wept violently. "You'll be all right again soon."

"I don't think so," she said, and her voice shook with emotion. "I feel so ill."

"And it was your pu—" Harold began, looking up fiercely at his cousin, but Ethel's hand placed gently on his, made him silent.

"Was it really the ice that did it," asked Robert, in a quieted tone, unusual to him.

"I might have been ill any how," answered the patient sufferer, unwilling to give him pain who had embittered sadly her short life, and by the act of whose hand she was leaving it.

"But was it falling in the ice that made you take cold?" asked Robert agai n.

"Yes," said Ethel, quietly. "I believe it was."

Robert rose and left the room. He left the house too. Was this his work? Had he committed murder? His father had almost told him so, and now he could not hide it from himself. He walked hastily up and down, trying to dismiss from his mind the unpleasant thoughts that would crowd there. It was unlike Robert to care, even if he had done mischief; but his deeds had never before brought such fearful consequences. He was publicly expelled from College; and to add to all, Ethel was dying, and her death was attributed truly to him.

"I am a fool to care," he kept repeating to himself; "and it was Harold's fault as much as mine. If he had come off the ice, I should not have pushed Ethel on; and if she had gone on where I told her, the ice would not have broken in, and she would have got no harm. Besides, I never meant it, and if I had, they deserved a

right good punishment, and I was the one to bestow it."

But this, and more than this, would not satisfy Robert's conscience, and as from time to time, his eye caught sight of Ethel's curtained window, he quickened his pace, and the cloud darkened on his brow.

"She is forgiving, though, at all events," he said to himself. "I would not take it so easy if any one had given me a ducking. I suppose I must oblige her, and not pay Harold off. It will be a sort of make-up for anything that I may have done to Ethel, and leave us quits."

So Robert tried to quiet his conscience, which, nevertheless, smote him painfully, and refused to be quieted. No one but himself knew, or ever would know, how intensely he longed for Ethel's recovery, and how anxious he was to hear the doctor's opinion after his next visit.

With whatever complacency Robert might have contemplated his misdeeds up to Tuesday last, the very thought of the past

was misery to him to-day. To be publicly disgraced, and that, where so many knew him, to be afraid—for he was—to meet either father or mother,—and to be looked upon by so many as the one cause of poor Ethel's accumulated sufferings:—this was a sharp trial to his proud nature. But what pierced his stony heart through and through, was witnessing how patiently Ethel bore suffering,—was reflecting how kindly she addressed him—yes, with genuine kindness—when every one else was cold and harsh. Robert was miserable, though he would not own it, even to himself; and many a time he wished with all his soul that Ethel would upbraid him; would say something for which he could hate her, and that would harden him against feeling sorry for anything that he had done to her. But Ethel did not change her manner towards Robert, nor towards his mother, nor the others. She was always gentle and loving.

Another request she made, and that

too was easily granted to her.—Might Mr. Dalmer come to see her? she asked, and, if so, would her Uncle be kind enough to write to him, from her, and say she was ill, and longed to see him. The letter was written, and but another day had gone by, when Mr. Dalmer arrived. When Ethel heard the well-remembered knock at the house-door, and knew that he had answered the summons, she was overjoyed.

Weak as she was, she managed to converse for some time with him. She told him how very ill she felt, and that she thought she was dying. She talked of leaving Harold, and the tears flowed down her pale, thin cheeks; but Mr. Dalmer reminded her in Whose Hands she would leave him, and how unable she, herself, had been to protect him. He spoke of resignation to the Will of God, of Whose love she was assured; and invited her to think only that Jesus, who had died for her, was calling her from a land of trouble and sin, into His glorious presence.—Ethel

listened, and was glad in the thought of going to her SAVIOUR, with Whom her mother already was.

Ethel, herself, knew better than any one else, how little she deserved such love, and so much joy, but she loved much in return: and she knew that her falls and short-comings were done away,—all washed in the Precious Blood, whilst she stood arrayed in the white robe of her SAVIOUR'S righteousness, accepted in, and for Him.

Mr. Dalmer was greatly pleased that Ethel had remembered what he had before said to her, and he directed her heart to thank GOD very fervently for having kept her from committing an act of disobedience to which she had been tempted. —"You would have been sad, my child, if, in looking back, you felt that through wrong-doing of your own, this sickness had come upon you. As it is, you know it for the Will of GOD that you should suffer, and that you can please Him in bearing patiently, without having to reflect

that you brought the pain upon yourself." —And much more Mr. Dalmer said, comforting her at that time, and afterwards, coming often to see her. On one such occasion, she said she was sorry that she had never been confirmed, for it would have made her so happy to receive the Holy Communion, as her dying mother had. He told her that she could, without difficulty, do so; and he, also, wished it. Ethel, years ago, instructed by her mother in the blessedness, and the reality of that Holy Sacrament, needed not much teaching, weak and ill as she was. Mr. Dalmer prepared her, for her first and last Communion; which she received with so much faith and love, that it could not fail to strengthen and comfort her the last few remaining hours of her short life, as she passed to that Heavenly Country, to bask in the everlasting sunshine of His Presence, and to bathe in the fountain of His Love, Whom she was then receiving veiled in the simple elements of Bread and Wine.

Chapter XIX.

ETHEL'S CROWN.

BUT it was not till the day of her death that Ethel received her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. She lingered on yet many days before that day came—sometimes appearing better, when hope revived: then again growing worse,—gradually, all along, the weakness increasing. Her Aunt was completely changed.

On one occasion, as she sat at Ethel's bedside, she said, tenderly, to the dying child, that she was grieved for having so

ill-treated her, and begged forgiveness of her many injustices towards her; and Ethel was so glad to pardon, so ready to forget in her Aunt's new goodness and kindness to her, its having ever been otherwise, that the gentleness and sweetness of the forgiving child, made the sense of the wrong done by Mrs. Ellis, strike deeper. The once proud, hard, woman, was humbled and softened, and Mr. Dalmer saw this, and tried to soothe her grief.

Though she had lived only for this World, without a thought beyond,—and in this World, a low and hard worldliness—ignorant, blind, and narrow minded; not discriminating between right and wrong, never praying, and letting self-will reign, by swerving, drawing others to swerve—drawing them by participation, by example; yet, if she were truly sorry, the past would be blotted out, and she could begin to do well, though at the eleventh hour, and spend that, at least, profitably. No wonder that she sighed, as she looked upon a

wasted, sinful life; but through those penitential tears, which she was learning to shed, the sun might yet shine; and if she would persevere, henceforward, unto the end, and not let the impression which Ethel's sanctity, forbearance, and patience in suffering had made upon her, pass away, Mr. Dalmer told her that she might take hope, and find peace awaiting her. And, in time, Mrs. Ellis' character changed, though of course, her improvement was gradual, and her backslidings very frequent, and the hill to be climbed very steep and rugged, owing greatly to the life that she had led heretofore; but in spite of drawbacks, she went on, and her children with her.

Ida, too, who, throughout her cousin's illness, was a fond and watchful nurse, was melted by Ethel's example, and loved her more and more. So did Lilla, and Ethel's heart warmed towards her little companion and friend, whenever she kept watch beside her.

Robert was more miserable than anyone. In the midst of all other sorrows, bad news reached him of his friend Turner, who had been dismissed from the College on the same day with himself. Soon after his return home, he had, in rash defiance of danger, and against the wishes of his friends, joined a boating party, and on this excursion, he, and two others with him, had been drowned. The intelligence filled Robert's mind with horror.—Turner, dead!—as strong, as full of life as himself, and whom he had seen not so long as a week ago!—And what was death? If it were an end of all things, Robert envied him, for he would gladly have exchanged his present life, conditioned as he had conditioned it, with its self-inflicted torture, for that: but if, as people said, and Robert believed too, it was a passage from this into another World,—where was Turner? Where would he have been, if, like his friend, God had snatched him from earth in the midst of his sins and impenitence;

and when these thoughts filled his mind, he did not wish to be with Turner, and Robert shuddered as he thought of the many wickednesses of which they had been guilty together, and of which he had often been the instigator.

Night and day, Robert dwelt on all this, night and day he strove to drive the thoughts away, which, as obstinately refused to be driven, and Robert was crushed down with the weight of his own reflections.

At length, he could refrain no longer from speaking, at all events, to someone. It was late in the afternoon, and Harold sat alone with Ethel. Robert knocked gently at the door, and gained admittance.

He stood a moment, and looked at her.

"I've just come," he said, in an abrupt way, fixing his eyes on the ground, and looking very much ashamed of himself, "to tell you that I did not mean to push you in the ice, that day, and I am very sorry it made you ill."

To say this, had been on Robert's con-

science for some time, and he felt happier when it was said to Ethel, though, at the same time, it had been a hard struggle for so proud a boy, to own so much.

He waited for no answer, and in another minute had left the room.

The next day he returned; and this time, on Harold's being fetched away, he was left alone with Ethel.

He sat silently by her side, and watched her as she lay quietly on her couch.

Robert's face was pale and thoughtful; his heart beat rapidly, for he was thinking of much that was disagreeable to re-view. At length, fancying that Ethel slept, he hid his face, and flung himself on the bed-foot, in a passion of tears. She saw him, and knew that he was sad.

"Robert," she said, in a weak voice, gently placing her wasted hand upon his head, "do not be unhappy about me—you did not mean to push me in, I know, and if you had, you could not have thought that it would make me ill—so do not be unhappy.'

"I am unhappy, Ethel. At least—that's not the word. I'm miserable, and I shall never be happy again," was his answer.

"I hope you will," she said, softly.

"Never, unless you get well again. I've been such a brute to you."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"But I am sorry now, Ethel," he said; "it's the first time in all my life, that I've ever been sorry for a single thing I've done; but I am so wretched, now, that I would give anything to have the time over again, and be kind to you."

Ethel still said nothing.

"No wonder you don't speak to me," continued Robert. "You must hate me—I've been so wicked to you and Harold," and now, Robert could say no more—the hardened boy was too much overcome—and hiding his face from Ethel, he wept most bitterly.

"I quite forgive everything," said Ethel, at last making an effort to speak. "I do not

feel as if I had anything to forgive, now that you are kind to Harold."

"I will always be," said Robert, rising up and striking his hand upon his breast. "I will do anything in my power to make up for all the bad I've done, but there seems to be nothing for me to do. I'm disgraced everywhere. If you could only live, and I could do anything to please or do you good."

"*Will* you do something for me, Robert?' asked Ethel, almost in a whisper. "I should be so happy if you would."

"Anything," he answered, "anything in the world, Ethel, for you, however hard it may be," he added, quickly; "anything to make you happy, and to get rid of the awful feeling that has come upon me lately."

Again there was silence in the room. Ethel seemed afraid to speak.

"Will you ask GOD to forgive you, Robert?" she said at length. "Will you say your prayers, and really try to be good?"

"It is no use, Ethel," said Robert. "God could not forgive me, and I could never be good. I am so terribly bad,—and I could not say my prayers either."

"You could," pleaded Ethel, persistingly, "if you were not ashamed to pray to God; and you would, if you were really sorry."

"I don't know what it is I feel, Ethel," said Robert; "I am more than sorry for what I've done; but I don't believe that praying would do any good."

"It would, indeed, Robert," she said, "for God would forgive you everything, if you asked him, and owned that you were sorry. Why do you think that He would not forgive you?"

"Because I can never forgive myself," said Robert.—"You cannot imagine my misery now."

Ethel pressed her hand to her forehead; there was much left that she would have said to her cousin,—much that she longed to advise; she could but take his hand in

her's, and say:—"God is so merciful, Robert; and if Jesus died for sinners, we are sure He will forgive their sins when they are sorry for them." And Robert saw her lips move in prayer, and he wished to hear her talk longer to him, but he knew that she had already spoken too much. Nay, more: he wished that he could kneel on the spot, and ask God's forgiveness and help for the future, and find peace and strength as she had found them; but he could not. He knew so little about God; so little of what prayer meant, that he could not pray, and the feeling with which he had, till now, regarded the free act of prayer was there, and he could not shake it off.—Not even when Robert went to bed that night, did he pray, and it was only the next day, when Ethel gradually grew worse and worse, and Mr. Dalmer came to administer to the dying child the Blessed Sacrament, and Ethel asked for Robert to be present, that with the others, he knelt in her room. For the first time in all his life Robert Ellis

knelt in the presence of God, and, as he did so, a sorrowful, yet not a hopeless feeling came into his soul, and the boy, who had scoffed at prayers, and ridiculed boys who prayed, now wept and sobbed aloud. Nor could he repress those sobs, which sounded from the far corner of the room where he was kneeling, with his face so buried in his hands that you could not see it.

The service was ended. Ethel had made her first and last Communion, and it was fraught with blessings, not only to herself, but to others also; for those who witnessed her joy and peace, resolved to follow her example.

With Ethel, the Holy Service was one of deep thanksgiving. In the midst of pain, she offered praise to Him Who had died and suffered for her; with heartfelt gratitude for mercies which had been vouchsafed to her, she alone knew how richly. She was very, very weak; she could say but little, though her heart was full;

and never, perhaps, had a first, or a last Communion brought such joy as this to the dying child. She could not make resolutions for the future, but she could feel charity, and practise patience, now. Body, soul, and spirit, she tendered in oblation, to Him who had bestowed them all. —She was ready to die, if it were her LORD'S Will that she should, and how gladly could she resign her soul into His keeping, Who loved it, and gave himself for it.—That evening, Ethel Lenie breathed her last. About her bed, stood gathered her relations, all:—little Harold, close clinging, with his arms round his sister's neck; and Mr Ellis, chafed the small cold hand.

Robert—apart from the rest—stood watching, in a stupor of remorse, the ebbing life. An unacquainted pang struck through him, as he knew it gone; and Mrs. Ellis, though sad herself, was trying to calm her daughters. Peaceful as Ethel's early life had been—so was her death; even more peaceful; for sin was overcome. The feeling of

envy had once marred her happiness, but that was long over and passed away. Towards the close of her life, she envied no one, loved all; and though, for some time, she had suffered unjust reproofs, and had been sad because no one loved her, yet in her dying hours, she was conscious of as great love as she had ever known in the whole of her life before, and her loving Father, Who had suffered her to be tempted and tried, and had yet made a way for escape, now smiled upon her, and the unseen Angels hovering above her bed, were waiting to crown her, to whom extended the promise that she should shine as the stars for ever and ever. Ethel's life had been short, but the sorrow of her young life was now over. She had fought the good fight; she had, with God's help, resisted temptation, and triumphed over sin; and now, she was entering into the joy of her Lord, before Whose Throne she would intercede still more fervently, for the continuance in

well-doing of those whom by faith, prayer, and example, she had won to be the children of that LORD, while she was yet on earth.

Chapter XX.

CONCLUSION.

THERE was sadness through all the house. Ethel was gone, and almost for the first time, the place she held in the life of each was known. It was evening—Harold was in his room, alone, thinking over his past life. First, he thought on the time when he had so loved his sister, and when she had been so tenderly kind to him. He looked on, and still Ethel was good to him,—better, every month, as he grew unkind towards her. And now he saw this, and regretted his conduct, longed for Ethel to come back

to him, longed once more to listen to advice from her, and to show his love for her in following it. But it was too late—regrets were vain. And Harold knelt at his bed-side, and shed bitter tears which none but GOD could see,—and his little heart was breaking.—There seemed to be no comfort for him.—In Ethel, he had lost everything; and he had helped to make her sad life sorrowful. He thought of his disgrace at school, but was thankful that his honour was cleared, and his faults forgiven. He resolved, with all his heart, by GOD's help, to try his best to recover his character, and to do what would have pleased Ethel had she been spared. And more did Harold feel than remorse, for having caused his sister pain: Mr. Dalmer had spoken kindly to the boy, had pointed out to him how weak and erring he had been, and Harold was truly sorry. He grieved, in earnest, knowing that his sins had grieved GOD, and he prayed for pardon.

Robert came in timidly, at first, but taking courage and going up to his cousin, he seized hold of his hand. Tears stood in his eyes.

"I am so dreadfully miserable, Harold," he said, "I've been such an awful wretch —and I feel as if I should never be happy again," and his voice, as he spoke the words, seemed so sorrowful, and Harold felt so miserable, himself, that his heart warmed towards Robert, and he pressed his hand. Ethel was the bond between them. It was she whom they both loved now; for her loss they wept; for their unkindness towards her they grieved; and the hatred between them died away, and from that hour they felt themselves friends.

"Nothing but this would have made me so sorry," continued Robert. "I never thought to repent of anything: but I do now, and I'll never laugh at you when you do right again."

"I'm going to try hard, Robert, and I shall always say my prayers."

"I wish I'd got a chance," sighed Robert. "If I were not so out and out in disgrace, I'd try as hard as you can."

"And why don't you, now?" asked Harold, quickly.

"Because I'm too bad ever to get better," answered Robert.

"Ethel said that GOD forgave everything," said Harold, "and she told me always to say my prayers, and then GOD would make me good."

"She told me to pray too," said Robert, "and I should like to obey her. Could you teach me? I don't know how to pray."

Harold took from where it lay, on his own chest of drawers, Ethel's little book of prayers, now his: and the two boys knelt down side by side, on the evening of the day which had taken Ethel from them, changed in spirit. Robert, the scoffer; and Harold, whom, so lately, a sneer had power to terrify from praying at all, felt no shame in owning their sins, and their deep sorrow

for sin, before GOD, and in praying to Him for help and comfort in the future.

And Mrs. Ellis had learnt to pray. Within the year after the death of Ethel, such a change had taken place in Mr. Ellis' family, that few would have known it for the same. Mr. Ellis grieved sorely for the loss of his niece. She had become very dear to him in her illness, and he deeply regretted having at one time so much misunderstood her.

Webster, at school, was Harold's confirmed friend. Robert, after a time, at the request of many friends, was re-admitted into Sandown College: and the Head-Master never regretted having overlooked his past great faults, and received back into the school, one who had so sorely disgraced it. The cousins were fond of each other: but Harold loved none as he did Webster, and day by day, hour by hour, he strove to imitate the example of the little boy who had walked so steadfastly in the right way; and listened to the dictates of his

own conscience, despite the taunts and bad example of his school-fellows.

Ethel had been gone one whole year, but she was still cherished in the memory of all, though regretted most by her little brother, whom she had loved so fondly. His dearest joy was in Webster's restored good opinion and loving companionship.

Ethel was in Paradise, but her example lived on earth unforgotten; and, had she but known, in her days of sadness, what her patience and sorrow were to work in others, she would not have grieved when sorest trials were upon her. Again the Scripture was fulfilled:—

"Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the World."

THE END.